

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EMPEROR CONSIDERS HIS REPLY

THE Emperor was highly incensed. The Rana's letter had rankled in his mind throughout a sleepless night, and now news had come that the Nawab of Muttra had been tricked. Immediately on discovering what had taken place during the night the Nawab reported that he had set out in hot pursuit. Early in the forenoon he had come up with the retreating Rajputs, twenty thousand strong. The temple car was lumbering along before them, dragged by several hundred Bhaktas and other willing helpers. A hot encounter had ensued, and a stern hand-to-hand fight in which many dead were left on the field. Late in the afternoon the Rajputs had broken and fled. But to his astonishment he had found the car empty. It was not the car of Krishna but of some lesser deity. He had burnt it. He had naturally imagined that the Rajputs would go the way they had come. The people were in active sympathy with them and their reports were false and misleading. He now awaited the orders of His Majesty.

This news coming on top of the Rana's letter annoyed Alamgir exceedingly. He had just sent a reply to the Nawab to say that his commands would soon follow, and was now slowly pacing to and fro in a superbly-decorated upper chamber of the palace overlooking the Jumna.

# BHIM SINGH

*A Romance of Mughal Times*

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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1926

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## PREFACE

WHOEVER attempts a romance on a Rajput theme in Mughal times must acknowledge his indebtedness to Tod's monumental work on Rajasthan and to Bernier's *Travels*. From Colonel Tod's book I have taken, with some minor omissions, the splendid letter sent by the Rana of Mewar to Aurangzeb. Tod gives this letter as translated from the Persian original by Sir W. B. Rouse. It is not for me here to dispute the authorship of the original letter. In an old translation of some Persian *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad* by William Hoey I found the letter sent by Aurangzeb to entrap his son Muhammad Akbar. I have added to it one parenthetical clause.

Historically considered, the theme of the book is the discomfiture of Aurangzeb in the Rajput War. I have followed the course of events closely, but have naturally enough taken such liberties as are permissible to a romancer. For example, I have made the rescue of God Krishna from Muttra take place several years later than it really did, and have pictured a different route as taken by the rescuers from the actual one. I have also, for greater dramatic effect, imagined the deaths of Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur and of Jai Singh of Amber as falling together. My heroines, Premabai and Ambalika, are purely fictitious; so too are most of the episodes in which the hero Bhim Singh figures. The

episode of the outlaw Goculdas is pure fiction. The full account of the battle of the Berach is also fiction, based, however, on the bare statement that Aurangzeb himself was utterly routed somewhere thereabouts in Udaipur territory. I have also taken liberties with the location of the Peacock Throne. All the fictitious episodes, nevertheless, are quite in keeping with Rajput history and character as recorded in the chronicles.

My hero Bhim Singh is a very shadowy figure in the chronicles. About his end there are conflicting versions. One chronicle says that he was killed at Nadol ; the other says that, being really the elder son but somehow in the end tricked out of his inheritance, he resolved to quit his country and seek his fortunes at the Emperor's Court. For his good services the Emperor made him Raja of Banera, a fief which, I believe, is still held by his descendants. There is also a statement in one chronicle that he met his death by breaking his spine during an exhibition of his special feat of swinging onto an overhanging bough from his horse as it galloped beneath. His brother, Jai Singh, has a later history as Rana : from his recorded acts as Rana I have constructed his character as a lad.

I venture to claim, therefore, that my tale is sound enough as history, and I hope my readers will find it sound enough as romance.

F. R. S.

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were already flecked with grey. To this redoubtable warrior was committed the keeping of the Pass of Kumbhalmer, guarded by the strongest fortress in the whole mountain range of the Aravallis. Not many months were destined to pass before he was to experience to the full the weight of this most responsible post and nobly to discharge his duty.

Cantering up to them on his horse 'The Thunderbolt' came a lad of sixteen, Prince Bhim Singh, the Rana's second son. He greeted them right merrily, for he was in high spirits. It was the first time he was to join in this dangerous sport of hunting the wild boar. He was burning with eagerness to show himself a true Rajput and to have his name celebrated by the bard for skill and daring. He carried a spear in his right hand ; in his belt was a heavy javelin about a foot long, quite unlike the short daggers carried by many of his companions, but he had no sword. This curious javelin was remarked upon by Thakur Gopinath, and the Prince explained that he had long been practising the art of throwing it ; indeed he asserted without any air of boastful exaggeration that he could split a young bamboo at twenty paces distant. The Rawat of Bhainsror looked incredulous, little knowing that his assertion was no idle boast and that the young Prince's skill with this unusual weapon was to be the means of saving the life of Thakur Gopinath on this memorable day—the last Ahairea to be celebrated in Mewar for some years to come. Alas ! other foes to the Goddess of Harvest than the wild boar were soon to be ravaging the smiling crops.

The kettle-drums sounded from within the front courtyard of the palace. All eyes were turned to the arched entrance, all tongues were hushed, and the chief-

tains ranged themselves in line with eager expectancy. The Rana had mounted his spirited grey horse, famous throughout Rajasthan for its speed, and was seen slowly advancing. He was followed by his heir-apparent, Jai Singh, upon another grey horse, which the Prince secretly maintained was more than a match for his father's horse 'The Arrow.' Both were dressed in green, the hunter's garb. There was, indeed, nothing about their dress or equipment to distinguish them from the ordinary chieftain. The Rana, who was but first among his peers, graciously acknowledged the salutations with which he was received.

Raj Singh, Rana of Mewar, was now in the twenty-fifth year of his reign. The years of his rule had been marked by a very severe famine, the dire effects of which had caused him to think of some enduring remedy against such evils. He had planned and carried to completion the magnificent *Rajsamund* by raising a wonderful marble dam across a mountain valley to irrigate the tableland below. Thoughtful, courteous and gracious, he yet lacked nothing of the energy and martial vigour of his ancestors and left a name as glorious as any in the annals of Mewar.

The Rana, with the Rawat of Salumbar, whose hereditary privilege it was to be next his sovereign, led the way across the terrace, followed by Prince Jai Singh. Breaking away from the group of chieftains, with whom he had just been conversing, Bhim Singh joined his brother. They wished each other the best of luck in this their first boar-hunt. The two princes were of an age—born, indeed, of different mothers on the same day and at the same hour. Though unlike in many ways, they were united by a warm affection. Jai Singh was

the son of the Rana's favourite wife Rangadevi, Princess of Rupnagar, a junior branch of the famous Rajput House of Marwar, whom he had won by a bold coup. The Emperor Aurangzeb had had in mind to follow the example of his predecessors and marry a Rajput princess. Rangadevi had been the lady of his choice. Little did he dream that the lady he chose would not only reject with disdain the proffered alliance but would even prefer self-destruction. She had entrusted her cause to the strong arm of the chief of the Rajput race, offering herself as the reward of protection. 'Was the swan,' she wrote to him, 'to be the mate of the stork; a Rajputni, pure in blood, to be the wife of the monkey-faced barbarian!' The Rana had answered the appeal and boldly rescued her from the imperial escort which Aurangzeb had sent to fetch his bride.

But the spirit of Rangadevi had not descended to her son. Jai Singh, short in stature and thick-set in build, was inclined to be rather inactive. He had attained only a moderate degree of proficiency in most of the sports and martial exercises of the Rajput noble, but he was a splendid rider. He preferred his flute playing to all other pursuits, and was in truth no mean performer. He was for this reason very acceptable to the ladies, for whose company he learnt to have an undue preference. Had a stranger been asked which of the two was the son of Rangadevi he would without hesitation have pointed to Bhim Singh. Taller than his brother by many inches, he was lithe and sinewy. No one could do such gymnastic feats as he, vaulting and leaping, swinging on the boughs of trees with almost as much ease and skill as the monkeys themselves. He was an excellent horseman, proficient with bow and arrow,

with javelin and spear, and learning to master the long heavy cut-and-thrust sword. He was patient and persevering in learning these arts though inclined in all else to be somewhat rash and impetuous.

Slowly the gay cavalcade wended its way beneath the Triple Gate, following the Rana by twos and threes. From behind the screens and the balconies of the palace the queens, their children and attendants and the wives and daughters of many of the chieftains, were watching with interest and discussing with animation the various chiefs as they rode along. Conscious of bright eyes looking down upon them, some of the riders made their steeds curvet and prance about to show off their own skill and tossed their spears high aloft. Many were the conjectures amongst the ladies whose sword or whose spear would reap the richest harvest ; many the anecdotes of former prowess. Whilst their elders were thus engaged, the children, fascinated by the pretty sight below them, were eagerly pointing out to one another whatever attracted their attention for the moment, and laughing merrily at the prancing steeds that would have thrown less experienced horsemen and the tossing spears that threatened so often to fall on the riders' heads.

Behind the eager group of children, at the further end of the balcony, Premabai, daughter of Thakur Gopinath of Ghanerao, was standing mutely drinking in the scene before her, and vaguely wishing that Prince Bhim had been one of the last to disappear from sight. She had watched him talking to her father and admired his fine features and the easy grace of his every movement. She had seen his frankly cordial greeting to his brother. The only child of her father, and for many years motherless, she often felt lonely and yearned for some companions

of her own age and rank. Bhim Singh, she thought, would have made an ideal brother. Their tastes would have been so similar. For the Thakur of Ghanerao had taught his daughter to ride, to shoot and to swim. He had brought her up indeed as a son, and had frequently applauded her skill with the bow, saying that the bow must be her weapon but that the sword and lance were beyond her strength. Premabai had acquiesced, and beyond handling sword and lance and learning the feel of them she had not practised their use. It must not be thought that she was of a masterful manly type, for this was not the case. Though she accompanied her father everywhere, even sometimes in petty skirmishes, learning to endure the sight of blood and wounds, she still retained the best of a woman's nature. Piety was a marked feature of her character ; her best friend was a learned Sanyasi who, with her father's approval, instructed her in Vedic lore. Though, when dressed as a boy, she might have passed anywhere for a nobleman's son, she appeared at her best in girlish attire. Her figure was slim and straight and supple : her face a fine oval shape with lustrous brown eyes, a straight rather aquiline nose, cheeks of the freshest bloom, lips of the rosiest red, and a well-rounded chin showing firmness and determination of character. When she removed her scarf there could be seen short tresses glossier than the raven's wing.

### (2) *The Hunt*

The Rana led the way down the gentle slope from his palace to the margin of the lake. Then putting their horses to an easy canter, and spreading out more or less into line, the whole party skirted the northern side of

the wide bay which Lake Pichola makes' at this point. Swords flashed in the air as some of the chieftains, bending low over their saddle-bows, made cuts at an imaginary boar. Every now and then a cavalier would gallop forward with his spear held upright until he saw some suitable mark—then down would come his unerring spear to strike the chosen object. These preliminaries were in order to practise their eye—for the wild boar is a ruthless foe not to be missed with impunity.

Then, leaving the lake, they diverged at an angle in a north-westerly direction, making for the wilder, more broken country amidst the foothills. This they reached after a ride of some six or seven miles. It was rough going for the horses, and yet their riders seemed to take no note but let their well-trained steeds pick their own way. Suddenly a halt was called. With profound obeisances a peasant approached the Rana. He reported that the scouts had sent him back to say that they had located three or four boars in a ravine, where they were hidden in dense scrub. This news was most welcome. Successful hunting on this Aharea day was held to be most auspicious of prosperity and success in the coming year. The Rana was immensely pleased and gave the man a rich reward.

Following the peasant's directions, the horsemen moved off a couple of miles to the opening of the ravine and found the scouts sitting motionless on the rocky edges of both sides and at the head, waiting until the hunters were ready before they hurled down rocks to drive out the quarry.

The horsemen took up their positions in a wide semi-circle. The Rana had the post of honour in the centre, right opposite the mouth of the ravine. Jai Singh,

stirred to unusual excitement, was beside him on the right. His brother, however, found himself on the extreme right wing close to the Thakur of Ghanerao. The terrain was difficult, but particularly so on the right wing where Bhim Singh and the Thakur had posted themselves ; for, a short way behind them, was a long gully full of broken rocks and bushes. If the boar passed them it would have a very fair chance of getting right away through the gully into the open country beyond and of outdistancing its pursuers altogether.

The Rana gave the signal. The scouts rose to their feet and sent large masses of rock hurtling down into the ravine from all sides. Down went the boulders, crashing and rending their way through the bushes, bounding on and on till they reached the bottom. The noise was tremendous. Almost immediately there rushed out into the open a drove of wild boar, in which there were seen four enormous hogs. They scattered in all directions.

Bhim Singh's heart bounded high with hope when he saw one big beast with fierce tusks speeding towards him. Keen was his disappointment to see it swerve aside towards the Thakur, who, putting spurs to his horse, thrust hard at it with his spear. So great, however, was the animal's speed that his spear missed it by a few inches. Turning, they both galloped furiously after it down the gully. But the Thakur was more favourably placed and gained ground faster than Bhim Singh could. Coming within striking distance, the Thakur, bending well over the saddle, delivered a mighty thrust at the beast as it rushed through the scrub. He would have speared it without a doubt this time had not a bush deflected his lance so that it but grazed the animal's

bristling mane and the point wedged itself firmly in a cleft of the rock. The Thakur released his hold and, as soon as possible, reined in his horse to retrieve his spear. It was useless to go on in pursuit, for he carried no other weapon that day except a small dagger in his belt.

Meanwhile Bhim Singh had gone thundering past and caught sight of the flying quarry as it emerged from the bushes. He was glad he had not checked Thunderbolt's speed. His first impulse had been to do so when he saw the Thakur striking. He hardly expected such an experienced hunter to miss twice. However, the fates had been kind to him, and now at last it was his turn. He would show the Thakur how to do it. But he was so excited that, when he had come within a reasonable distance, without thinking, he stood up in his stirrups and actually hurled his spear at the beast. He missed his aim, and the spear buried its head in the ground just before the boar. Perhaps it was this that made the boar swerve aside and turn in a short circle to rush once more down the track he had come. Once more Thunderbolt swung round and resumed the mad chase. The boar had a good start. It was quite a hundred yards before Thunderbolt had overhauled him. Bhim Singh looked ahead, and to his horror noticed the Thakur dismounted and pulling carefully at his lance to avoid snapping it. He shouted to warn him of his imminent danger. About twenty yards short of the Thakur there was an open space free of bushes, and here Bhim Singh trusted to stop the boar. Quickly drawing his heavy javelin from its leather sheath, he spurred on Thunderbolt to yet greater effort. At last his chance came ; he must make sure of his quarry before the bushes hid him. Raising aloft his right arm, he hurled the javelin with all his

might and had the satisfaction of seeing it bury itself up to the hilt just behind the beast's shoulder. Over he toppled, quivered and lay still. The Thakur was warm in his praises of the Prince's skill and very sincere in his gratitude. He knew well that the Prince had saved him from death, or at all events from being badly gored.

Meanwhile in other parts of the field the sport had been fast and furious. One mighty hog had rushed out of the ravine straight down through the centre of the line of expectant riders. The Rana and his son both turned their horses at the same moment and furiously charged after it. Jai Singh had the better chance, for he was now to the left of the line of flight. Neck and neck he raced alongside The Arrow, and to his utmost satisfaction found himself outstripping the Rana. After a wild gallop for three furlongs he was several paces ahead and couched his spear for a thrust. It was highly doubtful whether he would have had the strength to kill the boar had it kept a straight course. But with its natural cunning the hog seemed to realise the nearness of the lance-head and 'jinked,' by feinting a turn to the right and then suddenly swerving across to the left almost under the nose of his pursuer's steed. Instinctively touching the left rein, the Prince saved his horse from stumbling over the beast and simultaneously thrust hard at it. The great speed at which he had been riding ensured a deadly blow. The lance was driven well home into the boar, and there it was left sticking up into the air like a flagstaff of victory. 'Bravo, Jai Singh, for a beginner that was most skilfully done,' cried his father. 'Truly your steed is speedier than mine. Your brother's is called "The Thunderbolt"; hereafter yours shall be

named "The Lightning Flash." It is, my son, a most happy augury for the future. Well done, indeed ! ' The Prince's pleasure at these warm words of praise was beyond measure.

The chiefs on the other wing of the semicircle also enjoyed good sport. The remaining boars had charged right in amongst them and had been hotly chased by forty or fifty horsemen shouting in exultation. With so many pursuers the animals had little chance of escape. One hog had soon been despatched by a sword-thrust from the Bedla chieftain ; but the other, a bigger and stronger beast than his ill-fated companion, by making skilful use of all the natural cover and dodging this way and that, had eluded his pursuers for nearly a mile. He was seen to be making a wide sweep to the right, evidently hoping to reach the sanctuary of the ravine from which he had been so unceremoniously driven out. Suddenly he disappeared. When the pursuit came up to the spot where the earth had apparently swallowed him up, they found themselves on the edge of a deep nullah whose sides were too precipitous and whose bed was too rocky for even a Rajput to take his horse into. It was a matter for some discussion whether the beast could possibly have escaped breaking its limbs by such a leap. Concluding that there was a bare chance that the bushes had broken its fall, the party divided to block up either exit, some to the left and some, the more experienced hunters, to the right, that being nearest to the ravine. The boar, meanwhile, rudely shaken but otherwise uninjured, was squatting beneath an over-hanging rock gaining its second wind. There it would have stayed all day had not the beaters come up and, throwing down flaming torches, set fire to the brush-

wood. Once more the unfortunate creature was dislodged. So, slowly cantering through the bushes to the right, it prepared for a final dash for freedom. It was not to be. No sooner had it emerged from the nullah than it received two deadly spear thrusts in the muscular rampart of its shoulders.

The victims were duly measured. It was found that Bhim Singh's boar was slightly the largest, and loud were the congratulations to that smiling Prince, especially when it was seen that he had slain it with a javelin. The beaters came up with bamboo poles, slung the boars upon them and carried them off a mile or so to the rear where the Rana's cooks were waiting to dress and prepare them for the customary banquet in the open air.

The whole party then drew off in different directions to other coverts, but found that the boars had retired too far into the foothills to be easily got at. After an interval of some three hours they were recalled by the kettle-drums announcing that the banquet was ready.

Beneath a magnificent shady tree on top of a rising knoll that commanded a fine view of the giant peaks of the Aravallis the carpets were spread. They all sat down as they chose, regardless of rank and precedence, and mightily enjoyed their repast. The feast, it was declared, was the best they had had for many years. The hunt had not been marred by any untoward accidents such as had happened the previous year, when one chieftain in the scrimmage had his neighbour's lance driven into his arm and another had been unhorsed and broke a limb. All the victims had been killed. None had escaped. So let all the foes of Rajasthan perish ! Such was the general wish. The Rana had sent the ' Cup of invitation ' to the Thakur of Ghanerao, who had

little expected the honour, for he had done nothing worthy of note that day. With the cup he had sent the watchword 'Remember Kumbhalmer.' The Thakur gracefully acknowledged the compliment. When the bard had rehearsed the glorious exploits of the day in his improvised stanzas, and had called to mind the gallant deeds of the Rana's ancestors, the banquet ended. As the setting sun flushed the mountain peaks with a delicate rosy hue they mounted again and took their home-ward way.

## CHAPTER II

### • SANCTUARY

#### (1) *The Message*

THE merry month of Phalgun that had been ushered in with the Ahairea had drawn to its close. The riotous mirth had been, if anything, more lively than usual, as if to compensate for the two years to come when the sterner realities of war were to drive all other thoughts out of men's minds. Groups of people had continually patrolled the streets, throwing crimson powder at one another with shouts of laughter and ribald jests. The chieftains, all of them who had cared to join in the fun, had played the game of *holi* on the grand terrace in front of the palace. A brilliant sight it had been to see them, with the most graceful and dexterous horsemanship, darting at one another, pursuing, curveting and jesting when their missiles, formed of thin plates of mica enclosing the crimson powder, hit their mark. On the last day of the festival the big kettle-drums at the Triple Gate had summoned all the chiefs with their retinues to attend their prince and accompany him in procession to the *Chougan* or Field of War. There in the long hall, reached by a flight of marble steps, under a roof supported by square columns without any walls, the Rana, surrounded by his chiefs, had passed a pleasant hour

listening to the songs in praise of *Holi*, and watching the bawoons and itinerant groups below mixing with the mounted retainers, throwing powder in their eyes or deluging their garments with the crimson liquid. In the evening the Rana had feasted his chiefs and had distributed cocoanuts and swords of lath painted in grotesque fashion, meant as burlesque in keeping with the character of the day when war is banished and man is bidden by the Goddess who rules the spring to multiply and not destroy. At nightfall large bonfires had been lit for the burning of the *holi*, and the orgies had risen to their height. So had Phalgun passed in the year 1679 A.D.

The rejoicings in honour of Gouri in the following month were in full swing when an unexpected event occurred. The Rana, his chiefs and ministers, after having duly bowed to the Goddess on her throne close to the water's edge, were seated in their boats on the lake watching the graceful dance of the maidens before the image, and listening to their melodious hymns in honour of the Goddess of Abundance or on love and chivalry, when a written message was delivered to the Rana that instantly made him look grave and perplexed. A whispered colloquy took place with the chieftain of Salumbar and a brief message in reply was despatched. The Rana had decided that it would be unnecessary and unwise to interrupt the rites. It would be time enough that evening to take the necessary steps. After some hours of easy and good-humoured conversation, during which she was supposed to be bathing, the Goddess was taken up and conveyed to the palace in a stately procession. Before her went damsels with wands of silver ; on either side two beautiful maidens waved the silver *chamra* over her head ; behind her came a long line of

women, all chanting hymns in her praise. A picturesque sight it was to watch, as did the Rana and his chieftains from their boats, the procession wind along to the Triple Gate, up the flights of marble steps thronged on either hand by women in variegated robes whose scarves but half concealed their ebon tresses adorned with the rose and the jessamine.

When the procession had passed out of sight, the Rana and his retinue were rowed round the margin of the lake to visit in succession the other images of the Goddess, in front of which groups of women were chanting and worshipping. At the end of the day a grand display of fireworks terminated the festival. The Rana was now free to consider his course of action. One thing was clear. He must immediately to horse with a strong band and ride out to escort to his palace the sender of that perturbing message.

The very unexpectedness of the Queen of Jodhpur's approach boded something ominous. Already rumours were flying about the city that the queen was coming as a widow, bringing with her her infant son, Ajit Singh, heir to his father's *gadi*. It was darkly hinted that the Emperor Aurangzeb had had a hand in the death of her husband, Jaswant Singh, the most capable of his generals.

With a strong force of a thousand men the Rana rode forth from his palace that night to welcome his guest. Passing through the gorge of Debari in the centre of the hills to the east of the valley of Udaipur, he halted at the village of Mairta, thirteen miles away from his city. In the morning they would push on to the Banas river, on the further bank of which the Rani of Jodhpur was encamped awaiting the fulfilment of his promise to come forth and meet her there.

She had had an arduous journey across the mountains. But her fears of immediate pursuit were considerably allayed by the promise of the Thakur of Ghanerao to act as a rearguard to her small party. The Thakur had obtained permission from the Rana to depart to his estates before the Gouri feast was over. Premabai had been disappointed. She had looked forward to this great festival though she had often seen it before. Her father's word was law. She had uttered no remonstrance. Nay, indeed, when she knew that Durga Mata—the Goddess of the mountain of Kumbhalmer that was her father's special care—had appeared to him in a vision and told him to be up and doing, for danger threatened, she had been the more anxious of the two to depart. Thus it was that the Thakur and his daughter, with their retinue of five hundred men, had vowed to put an impassable barrier 'twixt the queen and her enemies. For news had reached her that a force of unknown strength had marched from Delhi under Afzal Khan and had already passed Ajmer.

### (2) *The Meeting*

At sunrise the next day the Rana had pushed on to the Banas. His royal kettle-drums announced his approach. He crossed the river and made his way to the Rani's camp. He found her sitting in front of her tent drinking in the fresh cool morning breeze and gazing across to the mountain barrier now beginning to brighten beneath the rays of the rising sun. Once more she found herself in the country of her birth—once more she felt convinced that the view of the mountains from the east was far finer than that from the west where her new

home had been for several years. She was grateful for the coolness of the morning, for she had passed a restless night of feverish anxiety and looked worn and haggard.

'Welcome to Mewar, fair cousin,' said the Rana in gentle tones. 'I am right glad to see thee, though, if rumour speak true, the occasion of thy coming is sorrowful. But I see thou art weary and sad. This is not the time nor this the place to rehearse thy tale of woe. Let us hasten back to the palace in which thou didst spend many happy hours of thy girlhood. My queens will welcome thee with open arms. When thou art rested and refreshed I will hear thy story.'

Korumdevi, who had risen to greet him, bowed her acquiescence. Orders were given to strike camp. The queen with her babe and her female attendants in palkis were soon ferried over the river, and the party proceeded by easy stages and frequent halts towards 'the city of the rising sun.' The whole of the Emperor's black treachery was soon told to the Rana's chieftains by the Rahtor escort. Fierce and deep was their wrath, but they restrained the expression of it, for they knew full well that their noble and fearless prince would soon give them opportunities to speak their passionate thoughts in the language of sword and lance. Late in the evening of the second day they reached the city.

In a spacious room on the upper floor of the palace two queens were sitting side by side on soft cushions. Through the beautiful filigree work of the marble latticed screens on the balcony the bright sun glinted and threw a chequered light upon the rich carpets within. On the walls were painted frescoes depicting the famous deeds of the Sesodias. Thus the royal children learnt the history of their race and were daily stirred by tales of

heroic fidelity and love of country. Queen Rangadevi had her arm around the unhappy Jodhpur Rani, speaking words of comfort. ‘Weep thy fill, cousin, let nature take its course. Hereafter the fount of tears will be dried up and thou wilt be nerved for bold revenge.’ ‘Ah me,’ said Korumdevi, in broken accents through her sobs, ‘but yesterday as ’twere I was so happy, rejoicing in my good fortune and in my dear lord’s affection. Alas! Alas! my pretty babe that never saw its father. My little Ajit, to thee I must be both mother and father. Rough and thorny is the path, but destiny wills that we tread it. Never, whilst breath is in my body, shall that cruel tyrant come near thee.’

These thoughts seemed to check the flow of the widow’s tears, and turning to her friend she said in firm tones, ‘Rangadevi, thou too art of Marwar lineage; upon thy help I count much.’

‘Nay, nay,’ replied the other, ‘in this matter all Rajputs are akin. All the clans will help thee, fair cousin. It is a deadly insult to the whole Rajput race. Soon shall the tyrant know what ’tis to rouse the dwellers in Rajasthan.’

Lifting aside the curtain, the Rana softly entered, and paying his respects to the ladies sat down on the cushion by the side of Korumdevi. Rangadevi moved a little apart. ‘Ay, truly,’ began the Rana, ‘soon shall the tyrant learn the wrath of the Rajputs. From thy Rahtors, fair cousin, I have learnt much of thy sad story; ’twere well, if thou art able, for thee to rehearse the events as they fell out, that I may see to the bottom of the Emperor’s new subtleties.’

Then Korumdevi began in a low voice to tell her tale. ‘Maharana,’ she said, ‘know then that twenty months

ago my lord was summoned to the imperial court and bidden to bring seven thousand swords. His sovereign lord had great work for him to do : no less than to take an army into distant Afghanistan to reconquer the lost province of Kabul. With Jaswant Singh and his brave Rahtors to lead the imperial forces, he wrote, success was assured. I liked not this flattering tone, but my lord saw naught but truth in his words. My heart was filled with foreboding. Kabul was so far away beyond inaccessible mountains ; fierce and cunning were the Afghans ; the cold would be intense. But these fears I kept to myself. In spite of them I determined to accompany my husband. Maharana, you have heard how well my lord performed his perilous task and recaptured Kabul for his treacherous master. In my belief this news did not gladden the Emperor, who had secretly hoped for Jaswant's capture or death ; he ever bore a grudge against him for aiding Dara and opposing him at Fatchabad. But he soon attained his dastardly wish. By his orders Shayista Khan, his fellow-commander and leader of the Mughal troops, invited my lord to a banquet of victory and poisoned the cup. The Musulman had always been jealous and basely suspicious of my husband, accusing him most falsely of treachery at Poona. In my despair I desired to commit Sati, but the thought of my unborn babe and a thirst for revenge restrained me. After my little Ajit was born, as soon as I was able to travel, my intrepid clansmen brought me down from those cruel mountains. Our troubles were not yet ended. The tyrant had the effrontery to try bribing my Rahtors. He dared to offer them large territories in Marwar if they would surrender the babe. The clansmen were most indignant at this

crude attempt to tamper with their loyalty, and with great scorn rejected this base offer.

' Then the monster sent forth a strong force to capture me and my infant son. To no avail. In a fierce battle, wherein there was much slaughter on both sides, we were victorious. But, whilst the issue was doubtful and the fortune of war seemed against us, I sent my innocent babe hidden in a basket of sweet-meats to a certain Muslim, a faithful friend of my lord. I myself had determined, if need arose, to kill myself sooner than be taken alive. The faithful friend carried my babe many miles and gave him over to my vassal Durgadas who was hurrying to our rescue. I doubt not that the Emperor will attack us with an overwhelming force. Therefore have I come with all speed across the mountains to claim sanctuary and protection from you. O kinsman, let us together wreak vengeance on that accursed monster. May his soul creep as a caterpillar on the floor of hell for sixty thousand years ! '

These last words were uttered in a high shrill voice. The Rani's fine face in her bitter wrath was contorted into ugliness. She seemed about to burst out again into speech when the Rana gently laid his hand upon her arm and said, ' It is enough ; it shall be, queen, as thou wishest. Aurangzeb has no cause to love me for snatching his intended bride, and now he shall have cause for an ocean of hatred. But I must call a council and devise measures with my chiefs for the immediate future.'

The council that evening was short. The Rana's decision met with instant approval. It was decided that the chiefs of Bednor, Deogarh, Mandal, and Banera should hasten to their fiefs, raise the feudal levies and help the Thakur of Ghanerao to chase out, or at any

rate arrest the progress of Afzal Khan and his forces marching down from Ajmer. Meanwhile a powerful contingent under Prince Bhim Singh should escort Korumdevi and her son to the stronghold of Kelwa in the Aravallis, where Ajit Singh could be under the immediate safeguard of the brave Durgadas, whilst the Rani, as occasion served, could nurse the spirit of resistance at home.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FUGITIVES

THERE was no time to be lost. A mounted escort of a thousand men, composed of the retinues of three chieftains who were still at the court, under their own leaders, had assembled very early on the next morning before the palace. Bhim Singh was in the palace courtyard awaiting Korumdevi and her attendants. Drawn up in line behind him was the small Rahtor escort of fifty men that were to form the Rani's immediate body-guard. Four palkis with their sturdy bearers were in readiness by the inner portal. Within a short time the Rana was seen leading the Rani of Jodhpur by the hand.

From the balcony above, the ladies of his Rawula or Zenana were watching the departure. Tender had been the farewell between the queens. Korumdevi had been much strengthened and comforted by their sympathy and encouragement. She looked a different woman. Instead of weariness and sorrow there was fire and resolution in her eyes. She felt that the tide of fortune had begun to turn. The period of vague uncertainty had passed. Now there was something definite to do, and the prospect of direct action against her foes had brought back her Rajput courage.

The Prince and the Rahtors saluted with their swords. The Rani was handed into her palki by the Rana, her

darling infant was placed in her lap ; the Rana bowed low and the curtain dropped. Meanwhile the Rani's women had entered the other palkis. The bearers took them up and set forth at a smart pace, the escort falling into position on all sides. When the party emerged from the courtyard headed by Bhim Singh, who looked resplendent in his gold-filleted turban with its peacock plume gracefully waving backwards, the waiting escort gave a general salute. The contingent of Nimach led the way, on either flank rode the men of Bijolli, the rear was brought up by the retinue of Bedla, one of the sixteen leading nobles of Mewar. Thus the Queen of Jodhpur set forth once more on her journeying.

Her going was not so leisurely as had been her coming under the Rana's care. Above all things it was important that she should be safely lodged in the mountain stronghold of Kelwa before the advancing foe could cut off her retreat. A thousand Rajputs felt themselves a match for ten times their number, but the Rana's commands had been to spare the nerve-shaken queen the sight of bloodshed, to push on with all rapidity, to leave the Bedla feudatories as guardians of the pass, and to fall upon the flank of the foe if he should be so daring as to venture near the valley of Udaipur. In obedience to these commands the Prince pushed on apace and reached the banks of the Banas well before noon on the second day.

Within the Girwa, or *circle* of hills that enclosed the fertile valley of Udaipur, the Prince felt secure, and rode all the way by the side of the Rani's palki. But, when the giant portals of Debari had clanged behind them, and they had left the friendly shelter of the encircling hills, it behoved him to keep a sharp look-out. He sent

on scouts far in advance, threw out flanking parties wide on either side and kept the rear-guard within close touch. Ever and anon he would ride forward to learn if any tidings had come in, or to the rear to see they did not lag too far behind. Constant messages were coming in from the flanks to report no sign of any enemy, but that the villagers were evidently alarmed and had begun to drive in their cattle within the cactus-covered mud walls of their villages. Full of the importance of his first independent charge, Bhim Singh was more restless than a leader of more experience would have been at these reports.

Earlier in the morning in the narrow gorge of Debari a brief halt had been called. The men unsaddled their horses and allowed them to graze. A meal was served to the Rani and her women in the friendly shadows of a rock. Here a pretty scene was witnessed. The infant Prince awoke and was kicking and crowing in the prettiest manner on his mother's lap. Gradually the men of the escort in her immediate vicinity, stimulated by curiosity, edged nearer. Observing this, the Rani arose and held up her darling Ajit high for all to see. One by one, these stalwart bearded warriors came up, salaamed deeply, exclaiming in harsh but tender tones 'Ajit Ki Jai.' They vowed that they would fight for his cause to the last drop of blood in their veins. The royal infant kicked and crowed his acknowledgment. The men were delighted and said that his father's vigour had descended to his son.

Their journey had been rapid over the wide plain beyond the pass. Here Bhim Singh had strengthened his flanking party on the right, with orders to search the woods well and to gather all information possible from

the many large villages that lay scattered to the eastward. They had crossed the Berach river rapidly, for the advance-guard had made all preparations at the ferry, and now they found themselves compelled to go slower, for they had come to a more broken country. Irregular low hog-backed ridges, the crests of which had a vein of quartz piercing the slate, retarded them. However, with the frequent relays of palki-bearers, they did not lose as much pace as had been feared.

Two hours before noon, therefore, on the second day found them ascending a ridge about four hundred feet in height, a mile and a half east of the hamlet of Siarh in the fief of Delwara. The summit was a small table-land with two small lakes and many shady trees. The chieftain of Delwara had ordered his tents to be placed at the disposal of the Prince. Bhim Singh's first thought was to pitch them where they stood, for the ridge seemed likely to prove an excellent rampart against attack. His keen eye took in all the details of the spot, and the knowledge thus gained was, before long, to help him in a daring but extremely hazardous exploit, the rescue of an imperilled deity. He judged it wiser, however, to cross to the left bank of the Banas and have no more obstacles between him and his objective. Certainly the spot would give them a better camping ground than they had had the previous night, but the well-wooded banks of the river, though less breezy, would not be unsuitable for a temporary camp, for he was determined to set forth again later in the afternoon. Accordingly he gave the order to cross.

As they were enjoying the mid-day siesta, a horseman came dashing in with the tidings that a party of fugitives with three elephants and sixty horse was rapidly drawing

near accompanied by some of the advance-guard. In a moment the camp was astir, though many found it difficult to rouse themselves after their wonted indulgence in opium.

Very soon the fugitives were seen. Prince Bhim rode out to meet them. Then, under the peepul tree in the midst of the camp, the leading elephant was made to kneel whilst the Prince assisted two veiled women to descend from the howdah. He escorted them to the Rani's tent. Their coming on elephants showed that they were persons of importance, and the small 'panchiranga,' the five-coloured ensign carried by the leader of the escort, proved them to be Kachhiwahas of Jaipur. Not many minutes elapsed before he was summoned to attend the Rani. In a tent set apart for dining he found the Rani and the two strangers. One of them, an old woman, was obviously but an attendant upon the other, a girl of fifteen, whose shyness was apparent, as she took a quick furtive glance at the Prince before bending her eyes to the ground. The Prince bowed to the Rani and then to the girl, who seemed too covered with confusion to respond. Though responsibility made him look graver than usual, yet at all times he was a young man to attract feminine admiration.

The Rani held in her hand an open letter. There were tears in her eyes as she handed it over to the Prince to read. On his beardless face it was easy to see the varied emotions of astonishment, anger and grief as they came and went. He glanced often at the girl as he read the letter, and found his pity for her forlorn condition warming into love for her beauty.

Princess Ambalika of Amber was small but exquisitely proportioned. Her face still had the delicate flower-like

beauty of a child, with its rich golden olive complexion and sweet regular features. Her eyes were large and soft, of that clear dark brown that betokens love and fidelity. Her glossy tresses, straying from beneath her richly embroidered scarf, fell upon the shapely neck upon which her small head was most delicately poised. Here was beauty's self. No wonder, then, that the Prince glanced often at her and longed to hear the music of her voice, but as Ambalika had never before left the seclusion of the palace she was now shy and frightened.

At the Rani's request, the Prince read the letter aloud, slowly, as though to realise the full import of every sentence :

'Maharani,' it said, 'may all the blessings of Sri Krishna wait upon you, and may Siva, Lord of Heaven, destroy your foes. Great sorrow, alas ! has befallen Amber. Jai Singh, my lord, has been treacherously done to death in the distant Deccan—poisoned, even as was yours, by the order of the monster of Delhi. My lord was ever careless of his food and drink. When you read this I shall have mounted the pyre to join my beloved in Indra's heaven. Had I a son I should have lived for his sake. But now I depart and commit my daughter to your keeping to nurture her as your own, and when the troubrous times have passed to wed her to some noble lord. The daughter of the Kachhwahas comes not empty-handed. Jewels and costly robes I send with her against her wedding day. Let your arm be strengthened for a double vengeance. Farewell.'

JODHBAI, the heartbroken.'

Whilst all this had been going on, a lad had been standing at the tent door awaiting permission to enter.

Across his shoulders he carried a bow and a quiver full of arrows; other weapons he had none. Not a detail of the scene before him had escaped his sharp eye. That Bhim Singh had fallen in love with Ambalika was clear beyond all doubt. He gave an involuntary sigh.

When the Prince had finished he looked up and beckoned the lad to enter. He came in with a soldierly salute and placed a short note in the Prince's hand bearing Ghanerao's seal. The Prince was startled at its contents. He told the Rani that bad news had come, necessitating immediate action, and requested her to prepare for instant departure whilst he conferred with the leaders.

## CHAPTER IV

### A NIGHT ATTACK

GLANCING keenly at the lad as if in surprise, Bhim Singh bade him follow, and summoned the three chieftains to a conference. The Thakur's note had been but a couple of lines to say that Afzal Khan with a force of five or six thousand men, with every prospect of immediate reinforcement, was bearing rapidly down towards the Banas. The note concluded that the messenger, his daughter Premabai, would tell all the details.

To Premabai's tale they listened very attentively, without a word of comment.

'Prince,' she began, 'my father had gathered a few levies, and with nine hundred men we rode towards the Kotari river to hinder Afzal Khan as best we could. There from fleeing villagers we learnt that he had suffered a severe check in a narrow pass near Asind. It seems that two hundred and fifty heroic Kachhwahas held the passage for two days and two nights against five thousand. They had donned their saffron robes, as a clear signal to the Musulman that they would give and take no quarter. Thus did they sacrifice their lives for the safety of their Princess. Moreover, the wild bowmen from the hills brought news that Dilir Khan, after a brief crossing of swords with Durgadas in Marwar territory, was retreating towards Ajmer. Matters then lie thus :

Dilir Khan has evidently discovered that his "bird is flown," and is hoping to join his five thousand men to Afzal Khan's forces and, together taking the Sesodias by surprise, to capture the Jodhpur Rani and the children. They hope to swoop down and be off before our levies are ready. My father is harassing them, but they are in great force.'

Bhim Singh looked anxious. He would have relished a fight against odds had he been unencumbered. He looked at the chiefs in some perplexity. They were busy turning over plans in their heads. Before, however, any one of them could speak, Premabai said hesitatingly, 'Prince, if a girl may presume to advise warriors, I have a plan that promises success. Let the Rani and the children and women servants be taken up on the elephants and sent along this bank of the Banas towards the hills under shelter of the woods. Meanwhile let the palkis be carried over the river to the high ridge yonder with seven hundred men—let them be seen by the enemy scouts to be moving onto the plains leading to the Debari Pass. They will of a surety be pursued. At six miles' distance is, as you know, a deep ravine in which we can hide. We can twist and turn amidst the ridges, and so elude them whilst their attention is diverted by sharp attacks by small bodies from either flank. They are sure to call a halt, for they will never venture into our happy valley in the dark. Then we can stampede their horses, and in the darkness and confusion, knowing the country as we do, we can fall upon them and put them to slaughter or to headlong flight.'

It was sound advice, though somewhat unpalatable. For the Rajput prefers an open field and a furious charge. Circumstanced as they were, however, it seemed the best

plan to adopt. With one accord the chieftains agreed that it was so, and remarked that it had not been for naught that the Thakur had taken his daughter with him on his expeditions. The Prince, too, warmly complimented Premabai, who blushed with pleasure in a most unsoldierlike manner.

Ambalika and the Rani, her son and their attendants, were quickly mounted on the elephants and moved rapidly away down the river bank under cover of the woods, accompanied by the Rahtor body-guard and three hundred men under the Bedla chieftain, to reach their destination by a circuitous and more difficult route. For some time Bhim Singh stood in a reverie gazing after them. A touch on his arm awoke him from his day-dream. Premabai urged haste. 'Thou art right, fair maiden,' humbly confessed the Prince. 'I am not wont to be so slow, but I know not what has come over me.' Premabai knew well enough, but wisely kept the knowledge to herself.

The river was quickly recrossed. The plan had been explained to all. The palki-bearers moved rapidly with their empty burdens. Soon they were on the high ridge, moving eastwards along its crest till they should be observed by the enemy scouts. Far off the figure of a solitary horseman was seen outlined against the sky. But only for a moment. It was sufficient; they had been seen. Descending the ridge, they changed course slightly to the south, whilst the Bijolli contingent rode eastwards to guard their flank and if possible to let the enemy pass between them and the main body. The plan succeeded beyond expectation. A strong force was soon rapidly bearing down upon them. But not so rapidly as they wished with their quarry seemingly so near.

Again and again they were furiously charged on either side by the men of Bijolli and of Nimach. These attacks were meant more as feints than as life-and-death struggles, for the proposed night attack promised more overwhelming success. Consequently, though there was loss on both sides it was inconsiderable. Meanwhile Bhim Singh, who knew the lie of the land, took his men in and out between the ridges, heading all the time towards the ravine that was to hide them. Darkness was rapidly falling. Fortunately there was to be no moon that night.

About two miles from the ravine the palkis were abandoned in the scrub. The flank attacks had ceased, and the contingents were working their way round towards the rendezvous. An impossible task for men who did not know every inch of the way.

It was not without circumspection that Afzal Khan and his men swooped down upon the palkis, for they feared an ambush. It was necessary to make sure that they were in fact empty. The courage of Rajput women was well known to them. In the gathering darkness they had lost touch with the pursued. Afzal Khan determined to bivouac and to scour the country the next morning. He knew that reinforcements were following him, under the intrepid soldier Dilir Khan. He did not guess that the feudal levies would so soon be on the war path. In any case, rapidity and dash were essential to success. The force in front of him and the forces that had worried him, he knew, were small. They could be brushed aside like mosquitoes. His horses were tired and his men needed a good rest. He gave the order to bivouac near some fine trees.

Soon the fires were lit and the wearied Muslims had a

welcome meal. The horses were picketed, watered and fed. A picket guard was set. For a short time there was to be heard an occasional laugh and a ribald jest at the expense of these infidels who could run as fast as the wild boar they hunted. The careless jesters did not remember the cunning ways of these wild boars of which they mockingly spoke. They did not recall to mind the courage and furious onset of the animal when at bay. Nor did they for a moment dream that their jest would be so dramatically turned against them. The fires were stoked up and the men turned in to get a much-needed sleep.

Meanwhile in the ravine, now filled with the whole of the forces under Bhim Singh's command, an animated discussion was going on as to who should venture into the enemy's bivouac and stampede the horses.

'Mine was the plan,' eagerly urged Premabai, 'and mine should be the execution of it.'

'Nay,' replied the Prince, "'tis too hazardous for thee. What will thy father say if thou art lost? Seven hundred warriors to hold back whilst a girl risked her very life! 'Tis unthinkable!'

'Consider, my Prince,' quickly rejoined the Thakur's daughter, 'the hazard is but small. Who can crawl through the grass like a snake as I can? Your warriors, born to the saddle, are clumsy on their feet, nor have they the knowledge and skill in woodcraft that years of practice in the mountains have given me. If the enemy is aroused too soon our plan will go awry. I shall not expose myself to any risk.'

Still the Prince was not convinced. The fact was he longed to go himself. It was pointed out to him that his place was at the head of the attacking troops.

Finally it was decided that the honour should be given to Premabai, but that, for her better safety, one soldier should accompany her and do what killing might be necessary.

Arming herself with a sharp knife and accompanied by a stalwart Rajput, Premabai set out on foot into the darkness towards the flicker of the bivouac fires. The horsemen were to follow after a short interval and take up positions as noiselessly as possible on two sides of the enemy, not too near lest their presence might be detected. They were to judge by the sounds of confusion in the bivouac when their time had come to charge. The Prince comforted himself with the thought that, whether the horses were stampeded or not, he would swoop down upon the camp and run the risk of arousing their outlying pickets and thus meeting with a determined opposition. Darkness and surprise at all events would be in his favour. He judged that three-quarters of a mile would suffice for them to keep clear of the outposts. Accordingly, as arranged, they took up their positions in silence.

Guiding themselves by the light of the distant fires, Premabai and her companion moved stealthily through the line of pickets. More than once they were challenged. Nothing could be seen, and the sentries, straining their eyes through the darkness, concluded it was some solitary jackal on the prowl or wild pig roaming about to root out the crops. In fact once, when they had crawled too near an outpost, Premabai had saved herself by uttering the peculiar bark of a jackal. She narrowly escaped the large stone that was heaved in the direction of the sound, but cunningly confirmed the sentry's notion by yelping as if in pain.

Judging from the occasional stamping of hoofs that they could hear, they guessed that the horses were picketed on the further side of the bivouac under the trees. Working their way round on their stomachs, gliding like snakes through the grass, Premabai and her companion lay still for a few minutes. They conversed in signs. The Rajput soldier's more practised eye told him that about seven hundred horses were picketed in lines before them. It took some time to gauge their numbers by the uncertain fire-light. Where the other horses were he could not determine. The commander's immediate body-guard had evidently placed their horses elsewhere.

Only two men had been detailed as line guards—one was, however, lying full length on the ground and snoring peacefully almost within arm's length of them, the other was slowly moving up and down the lines. The soldier motioned to Premabai to lie quite still, and in pantomime he gave her to understand that, after stabbing the sleeper, he would wait till the other guard had come to the end of the nearest line and then he would spring upon him. After this both of them could cut the tethering ropes and then stampede the horses. It would all take time; they could but hope the impetuous Prince would not precipitate matters, thinking they were killed.

Down the line towards them came the guard to the recumbent figure that had only two minutes before been stabbed to death without a groan. He stooped down and roughly shook him. 'Wake up, Abdul Karim, 'tis your turn to tramp up and down, I am utterly weary.' Those were the last words he ever spoke. From out of the darkness a strong hand clutched him by the throat and rolled him over for the dagger to pierce his heart.

Swiftly arising, the Rajputs ran along the lines, severing as quickly as possible the tethering ropes. When they had released about three hundred horses they shouted and yelled and beat them so vigorously that they soon scampered off in a wild stampede. Many of those still tethered dragged up the stakes in their excitement and terror. Away they rushed madly through the camp. The noise and confusion, the oaths and curses of the rudely-awakened sleepers were audible afar. The commander and his body-guard rushed to where their horses were straining at their ropes, untethered and mounted them and endeavoured to bring some order into the camp. It was in vain. With their terrifying war-cry the Rajput horsemen were upon them from two sides. The slaughter was terrific. Afzal Khan, who had been in tight corners before, kept his head, and with a band of two hundred men counter-charged and drove the Rajputs off from before him. But he did not wheel round in time properly to meet the attack from behind made by the Prince, who with his men had swept once through the camp and was now returning for a second slaughter. The Muslim horse broke and fled, taking their commander with them, who saw no point in a useless sacrifice of life.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RANA RETURNS THANKS TO EKLINGA

AFZAL KHAN, with the small remnant that had escaped destruction, rode rapidly northwards, picking up his main forces, attenuated by the constant attacks of the feudal levies that had taken the field as planned by the Rana. Dilar Khan was holding his own near the township of Pur in the Doab, or region between the Kotari and the Banas. He had elephants and guns and had strongly entrenched his little army. The Rajputs contented themselves with cutting off his supplies from Ajmer and harassing his foraging parties. He could not have stayed much longer in his entrenched position. He determined, therefore, on the arrival of Afzal Khan to escape eastwards by night. He would thus avoid the fortress of Deogarh, Bednor and Banera and have easier country to march over. Accordingly he moved his forces through this little Doab, crossed over unmolested to the right bank of the Banas and followed the north-easterly course of that river past Kachhola, Jahazpur and Deoli. He had thus placed the river between himself and his enemies. With a strong rear-guard and a strengthened right flank to beat off any serious attack from Mandalgarh or from Bundi, he withdrew his forces to Ajmer in comparative safety to await the further commands of his imperial master. Aurangzeb was

angered at the ill-success of his generals, but could not afford to break with them. He was biding his time.

Great were the rejoicings in Mewar when their land was freed from the sacrilegious presence of their enemies. The Rana summoned to his court all the chieftains and nobles except those in the northern parts, who were bidden to keep their levies in the field to guard against any sudden descent of the Mughals. The city of Udaipur was *en fête*. The streets were brilliantly illuminated, the people in holiday garb. In every house worship was offered to the tutelary deity, Mahadeva. Congratulations poured in from every side upon the Rana. The court bard composed stanzas immortalising the exploits of Premabai and Bhim Singh. With their names thus coupled together, it occurred to more than one that an alliance between them would crown their glory. The Prince was vexed at the suggestion; he could not put the picture of the beautiful Ambalika from his mind, and was anxious to seize the first opportunity that came to ride off to Kelwa and pay his respects to the ladies who had been in his care.

At present, however, duty kept him at home. The Rana had announced that he would go in state and solemn procession to the shrine of Eklinga to return thanks for his country's deliverance.

Accordingly, on the appointed day, a magnificent procession wended its way through the Triple Gate, slowly to traverse the twelve miles between the city and the fane of Iswara, the tutelary deity of the Rana's house and country. In the midst, on a splendidly-caparisoned elephant whose forehead blazed with jewels, rode the Rana and his eldest son. They were seated in a silver howdah, whose top was made of gold with one

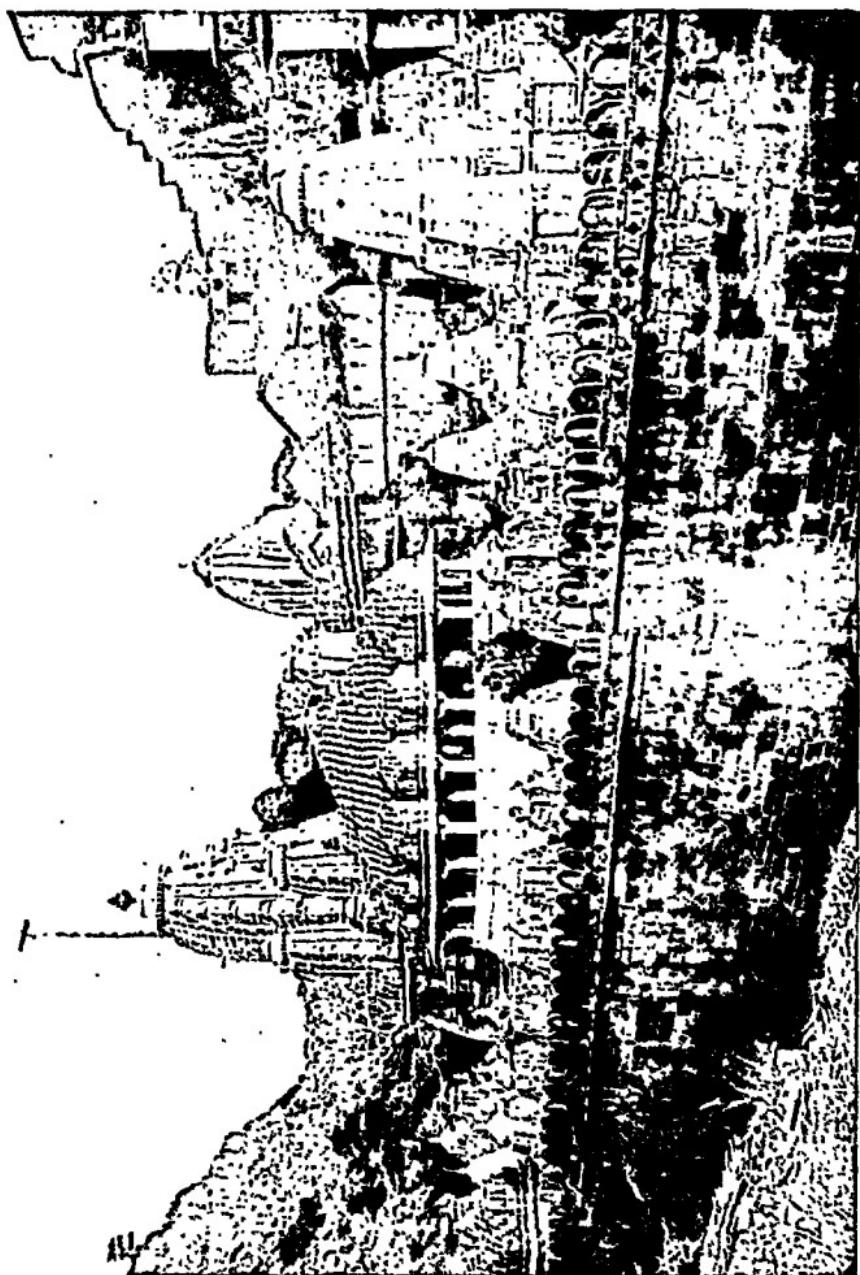
large scintillating diamond at its apex reflecting the rays of the morning sun. The Rana was dressed in a richly-embroidered robe of silk shot with gold. In his turban a gorgeous tiara sparkled ; around his neck was a wonderful rope of pearls. Jai Singh was dressed more simply, yet with a regal simplicity. His turban was ornamented with graceful peacock plumes, his tunic gave out a silver sheen, in his belt were to be seen daggers whose jewelled sheaths and hilts were of curious workmanship. Before the Rana and his heir-apparent the royal insignia were borne—the silver trumpets, the kettle-drums, and the crimson banner with its golden sun. Close beside them, raised aloft on a pole, was the *Changi*, with its sun of gold in the centre of a disc of black ostrich feathers. The heralds ever and anon rehearsed the titles of their sovereign.

The people lining the route had ceased their merry chatter when they heard the weird music that heralded the procession. In respectful silence they watched it pass through their midst, and only broke out into joyous speech again as they fell in behind to accompany it the twelve miles on foot. On Bhim Singh had devolved the important duty of marshalling the procession. Accordingly, he was to be observed, a truly princely figure, on his favourite black horse Thunderbolt, riding now forwards, now to the rear, to keep the moving mass in due order without unsightly gaps. In this duty Jai Singh from his post of vantage on the elephant helped him in a brotherly way by unobtrusive signals previously arranged between them.

Nearing their destination, Bhim Singh took his place at the head of the procession, followed immediately by the *Babas*, or the sons of the younger branches of the

*[Photo, Bourne and Shepherd, India.]*

## THE GREAT TEMPLE AT EKLINGA, UDAIPUR.





Rana's own family. Then came the *Gol* chieftains, vassals whose fiefs did not exceed five thousand rupees of yearly rent. They were always in attendance on the Rana, and formed a most useful bulwark to the throne against any combination or opposition of the higher vassals. After these came the chieftains of the second rank, the *Battis*, whose yearly incomes might run up to the limit of fifty thousand rupees. They, also, were in constant attendance on their Prince. The latter were accompanied by their retainers.

At a signal from the marshal, they opened out into two lines, halted and turned their horses' heads inwards. Each chieftain carried a banner with the device of a dagger on a crimson field. Between these lines moved the royal elephant, preceded by the heralds and the regal insignia and followed by the chiefs of the highest rank with their retinues. It was only on special occasions, such as this, that 'the sixteen' nobles of Mewar attended their Rana. Behind them their retinues spread out into a wide semicircle to act as a barrier to the following populace. Their task was easy, for the people were most orderly.

The shrine of Eklinga is situated in a defile with hills towering around it on all sides, their scarped summits clustered with honeycombs in long black pendulous masses. From these hills trickled numerous small streams of water, keeping verdant many shrubs, particularly the oleander, the flowers of which are acceptable to the deity. The whole site was covered with groves of bamboo and mango.

At the portal of the fane, the Rana and his son, who had now descended from the kneeling elephant, were met by the chief priest, a venerable man who bore the

revered name of Harita in memory of the sage whose benediction obtained for the Gahlot Rajputs, as the Sesodias were called in ancient times, the sovereignty of Chitor when driven from Saurashtra by the Parthians. He led the Rana, his sons and the leading nobles into the spacious quadrangle wherein were assembled groups of Gosains, men who having, as their name implies, obtained control over the senses were admitted to the priesthood of Eklinga. Some of these groups were distinguished by the rings of the conch-shell placed in the lobes of their ears. They were men who, in fact, followed the profession of arms, an order of celibate military monks who had come in from their scattered monasteries for this most important occasion. In Mewar, the Rana could always muster many hundreds of these *Kanphara Jogi*, or 'split-ear ascetics.' They made excellent defensive soldiers, and had been trained to use that rather uncertain weapon the matchlock. Siva, their patron, was the God of War, and, following his example, they made great use of intoxicating herbs and even of spirituous liquors. When maddened by drug or by drink they were formidable foes to encounter.

Altogether they formed picturesque groups with their ash-smeared bodies over which they wore garments dyed an orange hue. Their hair was braided tiara-fashion round the head, and within the folds chaplets of the lotus seed were entwined. On their foreheads was the crescent, the distinguishing mark of the faith of Siva the three-eyed God, from whose central eye is to proceed Pralaya, or the final destruction of the universe. As a sign of this they bore on their foreheads a vertical mark resembling the flame of a taper.

Passing between these groups, who made obeisance

as he moved along, the Rana advanced towards the sanctuary. The white marble walls of the fane dazzled the eye overpoweringly in the bright sunshine. Under an open-vaulted temple supported by columns was the four-faced divinity. Above him towered the pyramidal pinnacle surmounted by a golden ball. Fronting him was the bull Nanda of natural size, cast in bronze and of excellent proportions. It was the Rana's privilege as 'dewan of Eklinga' to perform the rites and ceremonies, superseding the high priest in his duties. Rana Raj Singh was a learned man and carried out the due ritual with peculiar correctness and grace.

The blowing of conch-shells and the rattle of the kettle-drums announced the termination of the worship and the coming forth of the Rana from the sacred precincts. The people raised a mighty shout, 'Victory to our Prince,' and the return procession was about to begin when the Rana was most humbly approached by a deputation of Brahmans. Their leader stepped forward and addressed him as he was about to ascend into the howdah.

'Maharana,' he said, 'protector of the poor and shield of the Gods, ill news has come to us from our brethren in Agra and Muttra and the sacred soil of Vraj. The fanatic who rules at Delhi has decreed the Jizya upon all who follow not Islam; his officers are carrying out his orders with rapacious zeal and seizing from our harmless Hindu brothers many times the value of this poll-tax. Would that the benign Akbar were still upon the throne. Some demon possesses the body of our Emperor. In the distant provinces we learn he has proscribed our faith, is demolishing our images and levelling our temples. Soon, we fear, the sacrilegious

mischief will visit Vraj. Great Krishna is in peril. The gentle God must again seek safety in flight. To thy strong arm, defender of our ancient faith, we look for protection.'

All who heard these words were wroth and placed their hands upon the hilts of their swords as if to draw them in defence of their religion. Slowly and thoughtfully the Rana spake. 'O Brahmans, truly Aurangzeb is looking for great sorrow. We have but now chased his generals from the field and cleared our land of the impious foe, forthwith must we go and beard the tyrant in his own province. Jai Singh, to thee it is most fitting that I entrust the safe withdrawal of the flute-playing God to the sanctuary of our strong city. Bhim Singh shall bear a letter of remonstrance to the Emperor, if haply he may be turned from his evil courses.'

Thus briefly and unhesitatingly did the great and illustrious Rana Raj Singh of Mewar embark on a policy fraught with serious consequences. Piety and patriotism alike inspired him to oppose the mighty Aurangzeb, lord of many a wealthy province from which great armies could be drawn.

Without more words the Rana mounted the elephant, and the stately procession set forth on its homeward journey.



a very happy frame of mind. He planned to take a small escort and to stay away in the mountains for a considerable time. It would be of very great advantage to him to explore the Aravallis, to learn all the difficult tracks, and to make friends if possible with the wild mountain tribes. Should the Emperor find himself free from troubles in other quarters, he would assuredly advance in great strength against his daring foes to punish once and for all their arrogance in notwithstanding his fanaticism. Then the war would be carried into the mountains. Sivaji, 'the Mountain Rat,' had shown him how difficult it was to overcome a guerrilla foe. But such was the pride of the great Mughal, such his confidence in numbers and in his own military capacity, that he might persist in his arduous task and drive the Rajputs to serious straits.

Foreseeing this, the wise chieftain of Salumbar had given a hint to Bhim Singh to make the most of his present opportunities to acquaint himself with the intricacies of the Aravallis, promising him at the same time to prevent the Rana becoming uneasy at his long absence. Salumbar had taken a strong liking to the manly youth and wished to see him make a name for himself like a second Partab.

Pushing rapidly on, the Prince and his small escort of fifty men soon found themselves at the entrance of that fertile alpine valley, the Shera Nala. He had, in passing, noted the salient features of the country, the number and direction of the low broken ridges covered with various prickly shrubs, and now he stood at the break in the hills through which the Banas flows. He followed with his eye the meanderings of the stream up through the majestic valley.

Eager as he was to get on, he could not resist a short delay in which to admire the grandeur of nature. The valley before him varied in breadth, but was seldom, so far as he could judge, less than four furlongs across. The hills rose boldly from their base, some with a fine and even surface covered with mango trees, others lifting their splintered pinnacles into the clouds. Nature had been lavish of her beauties to this romantic region. The wild fig, the custard apple and the peach abounded ; the banks of the stream were shaded by the withy, while the large trees, the mango, the picturesque tamarind and the sacred peepul were scattered throughout in great profusion. From the margin of the stream on each side to the mountain's base a series of terraces had been constructed, rising one over another, on which rich crops of sugar-cane, cotton and rice were cultivated, irrigated by the water from the stream raised in all sorts of ingenious ways. Wherever soil could be found, it had been greedily seized on, whether in the hollows below or on the summit of a crag. Pools or reservoirs dammed in with massive trees plastered with mud helped to water these seemingly inaccessible spots. Rice and maize and Indian corn in turn were grown here. In spite of possible disaster from unduly heavy rains or from locusts this region, belonging to the royal demesne, was undeniably fertile and could support great numbers of the dwellers on the tablelands below if, as had happened more than once in their history, they had to take refuge in the mountains.

Aurangzeb, reflected the Prince, would find it difficult to starve them out. Other valleys in these well-watered hills could also contribute to their support. Death in battle was glorious, but death by starvation did not at

all appeal to him. One of his chiefest forebodings was now laid to rest.

About six miles further on, they came to the foot of a mountain distinctively named *Rana Pag*, from the well-known path by which the Ranas secured their retreat to the upland wilds when hard pushed by their foes. This track led directly to Kelwa, but Bhim Singh determined to follow a more roundabout route whilst one of his men took the short cut to announce their coming.

Not much higher up the valley they came to 'the elephant's pool' at the foot of a mountain on the left through a cleft in which a stream rushed down. Bhim Singh noted it for later exploration, for he imagined that through that rocky cleft a foot-passenger might find a path to Kelwa.

At the end of the range which terminated abruptly on his left, the Prince turned towards Kelwa and found that the valley enlarged itself, presenting here a wild, picturesque and rugged appearance. At the upper end of the valley at the base of Kumbhalmer lay the town in which the lady of his dreams was sheltered. He was bursting with eager joy to see her fair face again.

His messenger galloped out to meet him and tell him that the ladies awaited his coming. From the gates came a small body of horsemen under Durgadas the Rahtor leader to welcome him. The Prince had hoped to make the acquaintance of this redoubtable champion of Ajit's rights. He looked at him with keen interest as he came cantering up on a white horse, and was able, during his brief welcoming speech, to see what sort of a man this famous chief of Droonara was.

He looked, every inch of his six feet of body, a soldier born and bred to the saddle. His fine black moustaches

[Photo, Bourne and Shepherd, India.]

VILLAGE AND FORT KELWA, UDAIPUR.





curled upwards in military fashion ; his strong square chin was covered by a short dark beard. His glance was quick and keen, the eyes deep set under bushy black eyebrows. A fine aquiline nose and a firm mouth added to the handsomeness of his appearance.

On his side also Durgadas had been taking the measure of the Prince. Looking him up and down in his quick decisive manner he very soon came to the conclusion that here was a young man full of promise and full of grit. He took to him at once. At the end of his speech he stretched out his right hand and grasped that of the Prince in a most cordial manner.

'Prince,' he said, 'on behalf of my sovereign lady, the Rani, I have just welcomed you, now on my own behalf I greet you as a brother-in-arms, and here is my right hand in token of unswerving friendship.'

'Chief,' replied the Prince, quite overcome by this enthusiastic reception, 'you have done me a great honour by admitting me whom you have not seen before to your friendship. May I ever show myself worthy of it.'

Side by side they rode through the town, beyond which the fort was constructed on rising ground. Within the fort lay a small palace that was occasionally used by the Rana as a hunting-box. It was a good solid building but architecturally was without pretensions. In fact it had been designed more as a place of defence against mountain robbers than a palace. The flat roof had a high wall around it pierced with slits for bowmen, and the balconies were protected in much the same way.

As they dismounted in the courtyard, there floated down from above the sweet tinkle of a *Veena*, accompanied by a lovely girlish voice singing a love lyric. The Prince stood entranced, rooted to the spot. Instinct told him

that it was Ambalika's voice, though the sound of it had never yet reached his ears. Was it by chance or by design that she had chosen a well-known lyric of love just at the moment of his alighting ?

Durgadas for a brief moment wondered why the Prince stood so motionless. He himself had no ear for chamber music ; he preferred the song of the sword. But realising it was Ambalika's voice, he smiled a slow smile beneath his heavy moustaches and said to himself, ' Why not ? why not ? The young man deserves a fair bride, and the girl though shy is a good girl with plenty of spirit at bottom. The Rani may not welcome this idea : methinks she is beginning to turn her thoughts to one or two of our Rahtor kinsmen ; well, well, the path of true lovers is oft strewn with difficulties. Let be, the Prince will surely find a way to win the fair one, I'll warrant.'

The Prince was most graciously received by the ladies. A long afternoon was spent in relating his adventures since they had so abruptly parted company on the banks of the Banas. The Prince had asked them first to tell him how they themselves had fared. But the Rani said their story was short and would keep for afterwards ; and the Princess of Amber had looked so appealingly at him that he was forced to comply with their wishes.

He told them of the night attack, of the foresight and courage of Premabai, and how the success of the venture had been entirely due to her and to his brave men. He himself had but done his simple duty. He told them of the great and solemn procession to the shrine of Eklinga and the worship of thanksgiving ending as it had done with such disquieting news. At this point he handed over to the Rani his father's letter for her to

read at her leisure. He expressed his joy at seeing them so well and, with a meaning glance at Ambalika, so happy in their new home.

The Princess blushed and looked down. The Rani warmly praised her talent, saying what a comfort and solace the dear girl had been to her in this secluded quiet spot. The Princess threw her arms around the good queen's neck, and in a sweet low voice said—'Devi, you are to me more than a mother; it is my greatest joy to help you: thank me not, dear, dear queen.'

Bhim Singh was enchanted, and longed for the day when those fair arms might be about his own neck and that sweet voice whispering in his ear. But he said nothing except to remind the Rani that it was now her turn to tell her tale.

Korumdevi then gave him a brief but graphic account of their journeyings. They had been somewhat troubled by the Bhils: but the Bedla chieftain had kept this over-curious folk at a distance with some well-aimed arrows and chased them away by sudden sharp charges. She told him how they had travelled by night, carrying torches to keep away the tigers whose roars had so frightened Ambalika. And now they were well guarded by the Rao of Bedla's men and her own brave soldiers under Durgadas.

Many such pleasant evenings were passed in each other's company. Ambalika lost her shyness and spoke to the Prince of her childhood's happy days in Amber, and questioned him often about Premabai—whose amazonian exploits fired her imagination. Bhim Singh was in the seventh heaven of happiness.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RANA SENDS A LETTER TO AURANGZEB

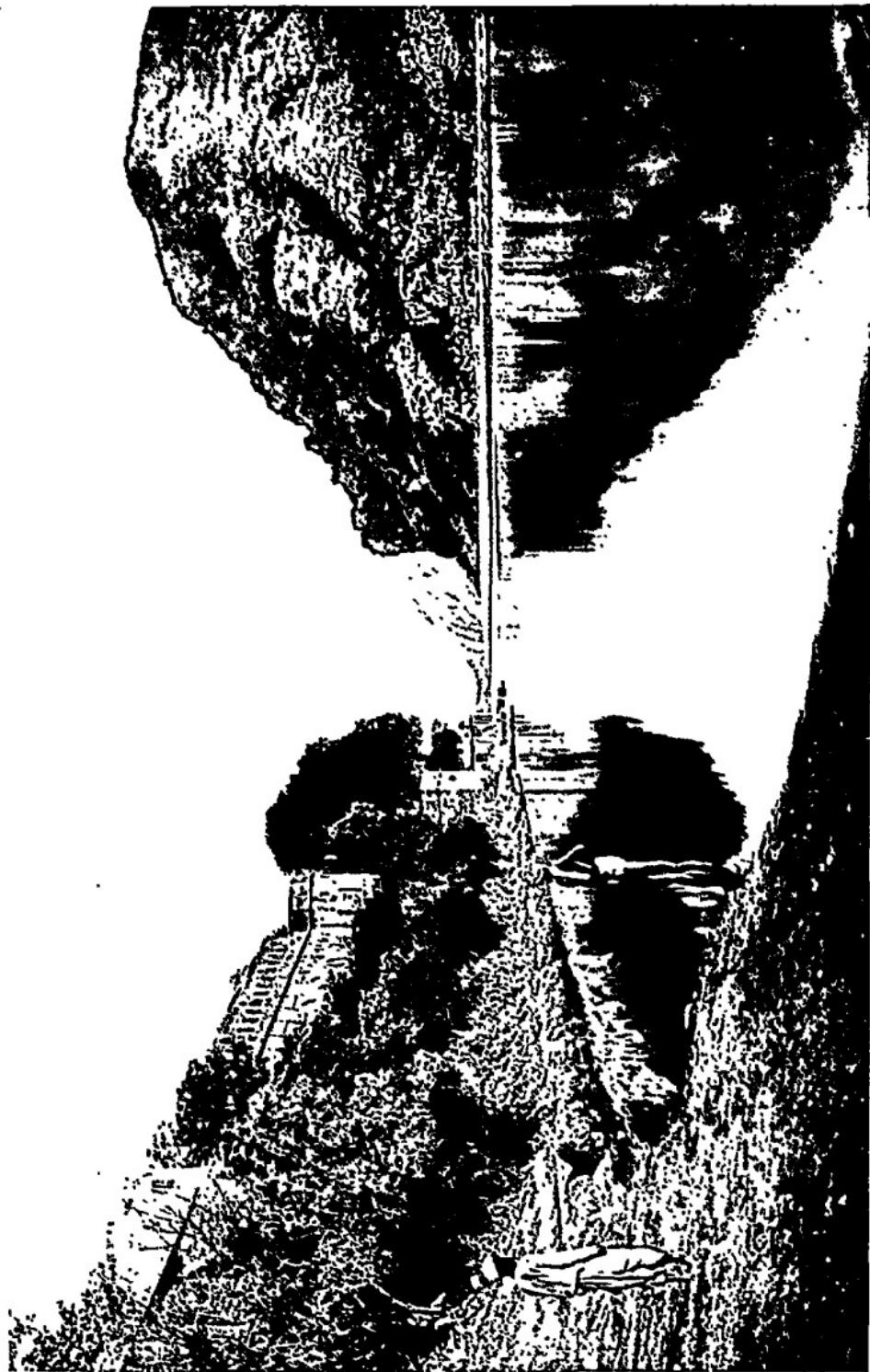
EARLY in the month of Aswija, Bhim Singh found himself with his small escort approaching the imperial city. A few days previously he had parted company with his brother at Muttra. He had not waited to see the actual removal of the God whom they had come in such strong force to rescue. To allay suspicion it had been given out that Rana Raj Singh was sending his sons with their contingents to attend the Emperor's Court, a duty in which the Rana of Udaipur had been altogether remiss of late years. To give colour to this pretension Jai Singh had left his main body some distance in the rear, and had advanced to Muttra with just the number of Mewar's former customary contingents. It was also pretended that the Rana's letter was full of apologies for past laxity in this respect.

This bazaar gossip was duly forwarded to Delhi by the Emperor's secret newswriters. Aurangzeb realised clearly enough that such pretexts were meant merely as a blind to the common people and to throw his officers off the scent. He sent an express messenger to his Nawabs to watch the Rajputs closely and to see that they did no mischief. It was too late.

The God in his decorated and rather unwieldy Vahana had been secretly removed by night and was now well

[Photo, Bourne and Shepherd, India.]

THE BANAS RIVER AT RAJ MAHAL.





on his long journey towards Udaipur. Jai Singh, in consultation with his father, had chosen as direct a route as possible, and over as much open country as they could find, striking through the flat plains of Bharatpur to the left bank of the Banganga. It was his intention to follow the course of this river nearly as far as Amber. The Kachhwahas could be relied upon to ward off attacks. Then he purposed to turn due south past Malpura to Raj Mahal on the Banas, to cross the river by the ferry at this most picturesque spot, and to follow the right bank almost up to its source. He would thus have both flanks protected, the right by the river, now in flood after the rains, and the left by the Bundi hills.

Bhim Singh was met outside the city walls by Raja Shiam Singh of Bikaner, who had been sent out by the Emperor to welcome him. The Raja was astonished at the smallness of the contingent, for he had heard the current bazaar rumour. When he learnt the facts he was somewhat dismayed. ‘Bhim Singh,’ he said, ‘you are putting your head into the lion’s mouth. The letter you bear assuredly contains no “apologies.” Aurangzeb will wage ruthless war upon your father. Do you wish to miss all the exciting times hereafter?’

‘Why, Maharaja, is it possible that the Emperor should maltreat an ambassador? Their persons have always been held sacrosanct. In what way can I be held responsible for the idle chatter of the mob?’

‘Nay, but it was your people that started the idle chatter. The Emperor will be annoyed at your trickery, and at the looks of surprise that will pass round the court when ’tis known you came with only fifty men. As for maltreating you—that is not probable. He is more

likely to show you much honour, and to go on showing it to you till you are sick and tired and long to go home but find yourself to all intents and purposes a state prisoner, a hostage in fact.'

'Well, Maharaja, it cannot be helped. Here I am to fulfil my father's commands. I must trust to my wit and resource to find a way out. Assuredly I do not wish to "miss the exciting times." Nor shall I, you will see.'

'I admire your spirit, Prince. You will need all your wit and resourcefulness to get out of yonder citadel. I can only help you on the sly, and not much even so, I fear. 'Twill be as good as a play to see you, a mere stripling, unused to Mughal cunning, outwit Alamgir. Where is his match in intrigue and hypocrisy ? But come now, my orders are to take you to my quarters in the city for to-day. To-morrow I am instructed to present you in the Diwan-i-Am. After that you will be in the Emperor's hands, and Vishnu preserve you !'

Proceeding through the suburbs, they passed many handsome houses and gardens belonging to Amirs and Mansabdars and entered the city by the Delhi Gate. They then passed down a long bazaar, and soon on their left there came into view the magnificent Jumma Musjid, a glorious building in red sandstone and marble. Bhim Singh stayed for a moment to admire its marble domes and gold-tipped spires. Before proceeding into the great royal square they turned aside to peep into the red-walled citadel through the Delhi Gate at its south-west corner. Raja Shiam Singh pointed out the huge stone elephants bearing the statues of Jaimal and Patta that had been placed on either side of the entrance by Shah Jahan, who had moved them from Agra where Akbar had set them up. There was no need to tell the Prince who these

heroes were. Could any Sesodia be ignorant of their noble prowess ? Every child in the Rana's dominions knew how Jaimal of Bednor and his kinsman Patta of Kelwa had met a glorious death in the defence of Chitor against Akbar. So great had been the Emperor's appreciation of their courage that he had caused these memorials to be made and placed at the entrance of his fortress. A few years later, in his chagrin at being discomfited in his Rajput war, Aurangzeb with pitifully petty spite was to mutilate these memorials of fidelity and valour set up by the magnanimous Akbar.

'Behold, Bhim Singh,' said the Raja, pointing to the figure of Jaimal, 'a hero indeed. A beardless youth, with his tender bride fighting by his side, 'tis said he encountered the great Akbar himself. In that fierce struggle outside the fortress gate they perished with many thousands more. A pity the Emperor did not commemorate the girl. A finer death, methinks, than on the funeral pyre which so many of her sisters mounted in the dark vaults within the fortress on that disastrous day.'

Bhim Singh's thoughts flew to the intrepid Premabai, but he trusted that the day would never come when his beloved Ambalika might have to face such a death. He could not picture her in battle. She was too tender a flower. But he knew that, should the need arise, the dormant Rajput courage would be awakened and would nerve her to even such a heroine's death as that of Jaimal's bride.

'Why did you, Maharaja, seek to turn me aside from danger ? Perchance you had forgotten these ?'

'Nay, I did but test you. Besides, it is ever better to know wherein the danger lies. A foe in the open field

is a hundred times easier to face than a subtle hypocrite. Forewarned is forearmed.'

So saying, the Raja led the way into the great square in front of the fortress, pausing before the Lahore Gate to show the Prince the long broad street, the Chandni Chowk, with its arcaded shops on either side, that ran straight through the centre of the city from this grand gateway.

Thus at last they came to the Raja's tents at the northern end of the square. It was Bikaner's turn to mount guard for a week with his contingent. Amirs and mansabdars might perform this duty within the citadel, but no Rajput chief would expose himself and his men to the danger of treachery. The Emperor had not dared to insist. The Rajputs had proved themselves far too useful in the imperial armies, and now this custom had become established.

Shortly before noon on the following day the Prince and his men were conducted by the Raja to the citadel. Full of a boyish curiosity, Bhim Singh was little prepared for the grandeur of the sights that were to burst upon his view and take his breath away.

Passing through the Lahore Gate, they found themselves in a long vaulted arcade, the horses' hoofs making the lofty roof re-echo loud enough to drown the music from the Nakkar Khana. Weird music it was, too, in which wide-mouthed trumpets, clashing cymbals and rattling kettle-drums seemed to vie with one another to see which could make the loudest din. Heard at close quarters the music sounded harsh, but on a distant ear it fell melodiously modulated. For this reason the musicians' gallery had been placed over the main entrance to the very spacious inner court, so that it

might sound pleasingly to the ladies in the seraglio far beyond.

Beneath this gate they dismounted. None but princes of the royal blood might ride beyond it. The Prince, as his custom was, looked keenly around. In the centre of the court they had just traversed was a tank, along two sides ran arcades. To right and to left ran streets, at right angles to the courtyard, with miniature canals running down the middle. Down these streets the Prince had vistas of pretty little houses and alcoves with fountains and gardens and all kinds of flowering shrubs. These were the quarters of the amirs and other imperial officers. In one of these houses the Prince was to spend a weary time, with nothing to do but kick his heels and plan ways of escape; an honourable captivity, but dreadfully irksome to a lover of wide spaces and the fresh mountain breeze.

The music ceased as the Raja and Bhim Singh crossed the spacious inner court to the noble hall of public audience, the Diwan-i-Am. Two of their men followed, bearing gifts, for no ambassador ever approached the Presence without an offering. Raised considerably from the ground, this nobly-proportioned hall was open on the three sides that looked into the court. It was light and airy. The ceiling and the several rows of pillars with the engrailed arches between them, painted and overlaid with gold, could thus be seen to advantage. At the upper end, in the centre of the wall that separated the hall from the seraglio, in a wide and lofty opening higher from the floor than a man could reach, sat the Emperor on the famous Peacock Throne.

Bhim Singh was astounded at its magnificence. Report had never conveyed to him the least idea of its

unparalleled splendour. His bewilderment was, however, momentary. Trained from earliest childhood to keen observation, as he moved slowly through the hall his eye could distinguish many details. The high and massive feet were of solid gold ; on them and the bars and panels of the throne there were sparkling diamonds, crimson rubies, rich green emeralds and dark blue sapphires set in various patterns—a perfect blaze of colour. The splendid pillars supporting the gilded canopy were wreathed in pearls. The canopy itself, glittering on its underside with diamond and pearl, was surmounted by that marvel of marvels, a jewelled peacock. Its body was of solid gold inlaid with precious stones ; of these a large ruby in front of its breast was the most conspicuous, with a pear-shaped pearl hanging beneath it. The tail, spread out fanwise, was made to look most natural with a mass of blue sapphires and other coloured stones. On either side, the same height as the bird, stood two bouquets consisting of many kinds of flowers made of gold inlaid with precious stones. The Prince reflected that a monarch who was master of such wealth and splendour would think but meanly of the poor gifts he was bringing, and felt ashamed to offer them at all.

At the right and left of the aged monarch, beneath lofty red velvet umbrellas embroidered and fringed all round with pearls, stood some of his sons. Eunuchs standing about him were keeping away the flies with peacocks' tails and cooling the air by waving large fans.

Aurangzeb was dressed in a white gold-embroidered satin robe of the finest texture. From the front of his turban of gold cloth sprang an aigrette of diamonds in the midst of which a huge topaz shone like the sun.

Around his neck was a rope of immense pearls hanging down into his lap. Bhim Singh could not help admiring him in spite of his high and unbending look.

Their approach over the immense rich silk carpets that covered the marble floor had been noiseless, but at the sight of them the Emperor smiled graciously. They mounted the steps to the platform which was surrounded by a silver railing at the foot of the throne. Here were assembled the amirs and rajas in splendid attire, all standing, their eyes bent downward and their hands crossed. At a greater distance from the throne the mansabdars and lesser officials were standing, also in the same posture of profound reverence.

The Raja of Bikaner salaamed profoundly, placing his hand thrice upon his head and as often dropping it down to the ground. Bhim Singh followed his example.

'Huzur,' said the Raja in a loud clear voice, 'I have brought my fellow-countryman according to your command to the Presence. Prince Bhim Singh of Udaipur brings with him a letter and gifts from Rana Raj to the Imperial Majesty.'

In his confusion the Prince was about to hand, or rather attempt to hand, the letter to the Emperor himself. He was intercepted by an amir who stepped forward and received it. A eunuch was bidden to take it up. The Emperor, before breaking the seals, raised it above his head as a mark of great respect. 'Ho, ho,' thought Bhim Singh, 'the little game of studied politeness is beginning. Let us see how he will relish the contents.' With a grave and unmoved countenance Aurangzeb perused the lengthy epistle and gave no outward sign of displeasure. 'Crafty old fox,' said the Prince to himself, 'who can tell what his thoughts are ?'

This done, the Emperor intimated that the Rana's gifts might be brought. At a sign from Raja Shiam Singh, who had taken his usual place amongst the attendant rajas, the two Rajput men mounted onto the platform, salaamed deeply and handed the gifts to the Prince : enamelled vases of the best Amber workmanship, a ruby and a diamond of price, and a richly inlaid dagger of cunning craftsmanship that, on a spring being touched in the handle, opened out into three deadly blades of the finest tempered steel. These gifts were handed up to the Emperor, who examined them minutely and praised them highly. The Prince was relieved, and began to think that the monarch's gracious and condescending manner was sincere after all.

Then, at a sign from the throne, two amirs came forward and invested the Prince with a Ser-apah, or vesture from head to foot : a vest of rich brocade, a turban and a sash of embroidered silk. His own turban with its peacock plume was handed back to one of the Rajput gift-bearers. Raja Shiam Singh motioned to the Prince to come and take his place by his side, whilst his two attendants should withdraw. With profound salaams they moved backwards from before the throne, the Prince to a place on the right of the platform and the two men to the bottom of the hall where the crowd of retainers was.

For one hour more the durbar lasted, and the Prince made good use of his eyes. In the great court in front of the Diwan-i-'Am the royal horses were paraded that Aurangzeb might see whether they were in good condition. The elephants came next, their hides painted black with two large red streaks down their foreheads meeting on the trunks. Their backs were covered with embroidered

cloth ; silver bells were suspended to the ends of a massive silver chain placed over the cloth trappings, and white chowries hung from their ears. Four small elephants, superbly caparisoned, walked close to these creatures in a solemn and dignified manner. Each beast as it came in sight of the throne was made to bend its knee, lift up its trunk and trumpet aloud.

Other animals were next introduced : tame antelopes kept for the purpose of fighting each other ; large Bengal buffaloes with prodigious horns that enabled them to contend against lions and tigers ; tame hunting cheetahs ; sporting dogs covered with red cloth, and, lastly, hawks and falcons of all kinds.

Finally there were brought the carcasses of sheep neatly bound up without the entrails. Bhim Singh wondered greatly what these could be meant for. But he soon saw young amirs, mansabdars and mace-bearers advancing in turn to show their strength and skill in cutting through the four feet, which were fastened together, and the body at one stroke of their swords.

The Emperor rose and descending the marble stairs passed out of the hall into his private apartments beyond, accompanied by his sons and the eunuchs. The durbar was at an end. An officer of the household advanced and conducted the Prince to the quarters that had been allotted to him in the fort near the Delhi Gate.

reduced many countries and fortresses to their obedience.  
quest and prosperity went before them ; and then they  
principles, wherever they directed their steps, con-  
castors. Whilst they pursued these great and numerous  
, Such were the benevolent inclinations of your an-  
virtue.

mortal reputation, the glorious reward of clemency and  
tious reign of thirty-two years, adequate to himself in-  
, Nor less did the illustrious Shah Jahan, by a prop-  
business.

to his allies, and a vigorous exertion of his arm in  
heads of his people; successful by a constant fidelity  
twenty-two years, the shadow of his protection over the  
dwelling is now in paradise, extended, for a period of

, This Majesty, Nuruddin Jahanigir, whose

him by the appellation of „Guardian of Hindostan.”

indiscriminate protection he afforded them, distinguished  
favour: among which that his people, in gratitude for the  
change, they all equally enjoyed his countenance and  
or of that which ascribes the existence of the world to  
secret of Dharmans, which denies the eternity of matter,  
Allahamad; were they Brahmins, were they of the  
were followers of Jesus or of Moses, of David or  
every tribe of men in ease and happiness whether they  
litan security for the space of fifty-two years, preserving  
heaven, conducted the affairs of this empire in equity and  
Allahamad Jelalluddin Akbar, whose throne is now in  
, Play it please Your Majesty, your royal ancestor  
exhausted treasury.

a tribute to be levied to satisfy the exigencies of your  
august me, your well-wisher; and that you have ordered  
disputed in the prosecution of the designs formed

, I have been informed that enormous sums have been

interested.

in which public as well as private welfare is greatly sume to solicit the royal attention to some circumstances former services and Your Majesty's condescension, I prefer to inform a doubt therefore. Reflecting thereto on my every bounden act of obedience and loyalty. This my inclination is notorious, nor can your royal wisdom presence, I am nevertheless zealous in the performance well-wisher have separated myself from your sublime is as conspicuous as the sun and moon. Although I your Almightiness, and the munificence of Your Majesty, which , All due praise be rendered to the glory of the the dignified letter of remonstrance of Rana Raj Singh. Aurangzeb then read aloud slowly in low even tones condign punishment.

now premise, I have determined to visit Udaipur with must deliberate what course to pursue. This much I give close heed. I shall read it to you. Thereafter we and tripped the pursuit. This impudent letter is long. They have removed the great idol of Krishna at Muttra during begond measure. Their insolence must be curbed. , Akbar,' he began in a low voice, 'these Rajputs are cussed.

On his son's entry, Aurangzeb seated himself on a low divan at the end of the room and motioned his son to sit near him—a mark of high condescension and a sign that some most confidential matters were to be discussed. Muhammad Akbar, whose coming he impatiently waited. The contents had outraged his feelings. He had determined to communicate them to none but his son Sultan immed to communicate them to none but his son Sultan. Letter that Bhim Singh had brought the previous morning. Short in stature and slender in figure he walked with a distinc stoop, his hands behind his back clasping the

, In fine, the tribute you demand from the Hindus is repugnant to justice; it is equally foreign to good policy, as it must impoverish the country: moreover, it is an innovation and an infringement of the laws of Hindostan. But if zeal for your religion hat induced you to determine upon this measure, the demand ought, by the rules of equity, to have been made first upon Ram Singh, who is esteemed the principal amongst the Hindus. Then and flies is unworthy of a heroic or generous mind. It have less difficulty to encounter; but to torment ants is wonderrful that the ministers of your Government should have neglected to instruct Your Majesty in the rules of rectitude and honour.

, By the beard of the Prophet! that last is insufferably insolent, growled the Emperor, clenching his fist. Does he presume to lecture me upon the duties of religion? I do but humbly strive to carry out what the Holy Qur'an ordains. This impious Indian dares to asperse the commands of the Prophet (Peace be on His Name). Muhammad of his mercy bids the faithful spare the life of the unbeliever if he pay the fizya.

The Rana would dispute it with me—Alamgir! He shall know what it is to challenge my power. Look, Akbar, at this—the sign of a lance over his seal. Has

so he would threaten me, would he?

that Rana's hereditary chief counsellor, the Rawat of Salumar, to place his emblem over the Rana's seal on that is but an ancient custom. "It is the privilege of a Rajput prince, knew something of their customs, of a Rajput prince, who, being the son , Nay, my father, replied Akbar, who, standing in honour of his ancestor Chondu who renounced all important documents. It is a privilege of long

enough it the pleasure of the Admiralty.

поглавар пак сър ви кр

the most important thing is to have a clear understanding of what you want to do with your life. You should also have a clear idea of what kind of work you would like to do. This will help you to choose the right career path. It is important to remember that there are many different types of careers available, so it is essential to research and understand each one before making a decision. Once you have decided on a career path, it is important to set goals and work towards them. This will help you to stay focused and motivated. It is also important to keep learning and adapting to new challenges as they arise. By doing this, you can increase your chances of success in your chosen field.

With these words the Emperor signed to his son that the interview was over and that he might take his departure. Sultan Akbar arose and with obeisances left the chamber, to proceed forthwith on a visit to Bim Singh, whose appearance had so impressed him. "He is not so simple," thought the Sultan, "as my father seems to think. We shall see. 'Twill be a pleasant occupation these idle days at Court."

and caution.

useful information from him if you proceed with skill a simple-minded youth. Perchance, too, you may glean a greater honour shown to his father. He seems to wait longer the longer we detain him, must await our pleasure: that the demands that an ambassador him know that the honour shown to his father's remissness visit the young man and show him all friendliness. Let about attendance at our court. You, Akbar, do you honour. He must make up for his father's remissness shall hoodwink the young man and show him all nor his men from the city. Every gate is watched, that he shall not be permitted forth from the citadel, Rana's son shall be our hostage. I have given orders upon the Rajputs,

so moved. The end of the world was about to come to betray strong emotion. Akbar had never seen him most unusual for the prudent, cold and crafty arrangement passed for breath in his excessive agitation. It was Sultan Akbar interrupted ascent whilst his father honours. It is their own ill-doing they attribute to me; robe! See how I trusted them and gave them high soon to me. Smallpox, frostbath, comes from a poisoned the effrontery to accuse the death of Jawsant's first-born The infant must be surrendered to my care. They have your brothers shall lead them. On both sides of the all the provinces I shall gather my armies. You and mountains we shall proceed in overwheeling strength, for Jawsant's kinship too must be beaten to the dust. The infant must be surrendered to my care. They have answered by stern deeds and not by soft words. From , No matter, rejoined his father, this letter shall be

his rights to the guard in favour of his younger brother. It signifies no threat.

arranged by the imperial shikaris is a tame affair.  
, 'No, never', replied the Sultan; 'lion-hunting as  
cowardly beast.'

Bhim Singh after a pause, 'They say that a lion is a  
more formidable foe than a tiger, who, after all, is a  
'Have you ever hunted the lion, Sultan?', asked  
elephant.

A pony is no match in speed for a madly infuriated  
, 'Then', rejoined Akbar, 'you would have been killed.

but such courage as yours! I should have fled.'

, 'Sultan', he exclaimed, 'my Rajputs call me brave,  
listened to this stirring tale.

Prince Bhim's eyes glinted with excitement as he  
his former foe who had come lumbering after him.

screaming loudly, wheel about and once more engaged  
trunk. The pain of this had enraged the enraged master,  
had slashed severely at the softer part of the uplifted  
creature he had sprung to his feet and with his sword  
before the elephant could kneel and grasp the poor  
between them and had received the prodding tusks, but  
rolled into the sand. Luckily the pony had fallen be-  
ast had caught his pony's legs, and over they had  
into the levitated's trunk, but to little purpose. The  
and charged. At close quarters he had hurled his spear  
But, soon coming to himself, he had dug in his spurs  
His pony and he had stood rooted to the spot in terror.  
could do nothing to restrain the infuriated master.  
beast, clinging to the rope that passed round its back,  
at him. The mahout, lying on the hind quarters of the  
encounter, had left off fighting and had dashed madly  
too near, and one elephant, getting the worst of the  
conflict and had mounted their ponies. He had ventured  
monsters, he and his brothers had left the upper bal-

how, in order to get a better view of the surrounding sandystretch between the palace and the river bank; adventures. He told of a great elephant fight on the than twice the Prince's age and had many exciting Akbar in turn told of his first tiger. Akbar was more Bhim Singh narrated the story of his first boar and tallking of the pleasures of the chase.

given up practising upon him and they had fallen to skill in fencing awkward questions. He had very soon admire the young man for his artless pose and for his was fast becoming a sincere friend. He had learnt to Prince. He had begun by hypocritical friendship; he weeks now the Sultan had been constantly visiting the one battery night in the latter was taking his leave Alihamad Akbar as the question of Pushtya. For many Thus Bhim Singh answered the question of Sultan pleasure, especially as he has sent you to entertain me,' my deep gratitude. I am content to await his imperial overwhelming kindness. Please convey to His Majesty some distinction is shown to my unworthy self. It is Alijesty has showered upon me. Almost every day Prince, and so I rejoice. Look at these noble gifts His gracelessly shown by your reverend father will please

'Nay, nay, I am content enough. Such honour so

## PRINCE BHIM ESCAPES

### CHAPTER IX

The almost imposed on Sultan Akbar, who, however,  
immediately brought back to a dungeon.

be caught when once he did get away and be into  
The Prince was taking no chances. He had no wish to  
simple-minded fellow whose head was easily turned.  
convinced the Emperor's notion that he was indeed a  
be hard to find. Thus he killed their suspicions and  
distinguished service? A more faithful servant it would  
majesty. Would not the Emperor take him into his  
true merit was acknowledged by the discerning eye of  
court, he exclaimed, he was nobody; here at last his  
lesibly prattled to the imperial officer. In the Khan's  
stay in such a paradise for ever. In this strain he art-  
by a sense of his importance and possessed of a desire to  
put on as much swagger as possible, as it overpowered  
He assumed a countenance that he did not feel and

Prince began to turn his thoughts to escape.  
Now the gilded captivity was beginning to pall, and the  
in smartness of turn-out and gorgedness of enjoyment.  
mounting guard in the fortress,ying with one another  
he had watched them and the superior mansabars  
him in their quarters in the citadel. For many nights  
in the mosque. Not a few of the amirs had entered  
he had watched the Emperor's departure to say prayers  
stupendous marvel the Peacock Throne. Each Friday  
jewels, but none of the other six was equal to that  
on a different throne, magnificent and blazoned with  
plenty to see of interest. Each week the Emperor sat  
and so the time had passed. At first there had been  
youthful ignorance.

sufficient for the Prince, who meekly apologised for his  
alone into the dangerous streets. A thin excuse but  
courage for such an honourable personage to venture

apple of the Emperor's eye, and that it was against  
guards had said that an ambassador's life was as the  
had been courteously turned back at the gate. The  
morning when, thinking to take a stroll into the city, he  
had become evident to the young man ever since the  
That he was, as Raja Shiam had predicted, a prisoner  
intended to reach the ear of any possible spy.

The honour to be shown to them. These remarks were  
some remarks about a Rajaput's devotion to animals and  
on these animals before partaking of it himself, making  
courtesy from the imperial kitchen. He tested the food  
providing suspicions of the dishes occasionally sent by  
This was indeed a useful gift to the Prince, who was  
a couple of his best dogs and a beautiful falcon.

In one of his earliest visits, the Sultan had brought  
with him to show the Prince his sporting dogs and his  
falcon. He detailed the methods of training and  
enumerated the qualities looked for by the breeder.  
Delighted to meet such an enthusiastic enquirer into  
such details, the Sultan had presented Bhim Singh with  
a falcon. He detailed the methods of training and  
with him to show the Prince his sporting dogs and his  
falcon. In one of his earliest visits, the Sultan had brought

spurts, a brother of the craft.  
liking firmly grounded on the true sportsman's admiration  
both sides these two men learned to like each other—a  
Thus with many tales of adventure and shikar on  
quest demands such arrangements. This butchery, not  
ball. His Alaisety, the Emperor, is now old, and eti-  
at him, is entangled in the net and shot by a musket  
prodiced by long pikes into activity, with a roar springing  
father comes up on an elephant. The sleepy lion,  
lion gets drowsy; a net is drawn around his tail. All  
there is no chance. The bait is drugged with opium; the  
has no chance. The poor beast

Bhim Singh picked up his ears. An idea had flashed coming Muhammed procession.

doubtful whether the Emperor might not prohibit the old days at Court were no more. It was even becoming things had distinctly changed for the worse : the happy ways to avoid being driven away from employment his sect ; how they had to conform outwardly to Sunni he gradually unbent himself of the grievances of of his imperial master's strict Sunni orthodoxy. In fact enquiry later on, was a Shaikh who did not at all approve Muhammad Ali, so the Prince learnt by judicious shrewd.

over the face of one of the attendants bringing in the as he spoke, he noticed a distinct look of disquiet pass his faith and zeal for religion. Changing to gleance up but hypocritically to praise the Emperor's devotion to Prince applauded this prohibition, and went on warmly from a distance and then immediately retire. The Wednesday to the public audience to make their salams established custom that he allowed them to come every gurus to enter. It was only in compunction with long- Jahan had done. He would not permit the dancing his father paid more attention to decorum than Shaikh the seraglio, had mentioned with a tinge of regret that him. Sultan Akbar, in explaining the amusements of him. The merest accident revealed to him was corruptible. After some time before the Prince decided, after careful scrutiny, which of the many servants assinged

a coin in his pockets !

Prince was a mistake. It put the means of bribery into the young man's hands, and he had come almost without of lavish gifts, especially of rings and jewels, to the giving him self. His giving

was generous enough to keep his suspicions of the young man's true character to himself. So Akbar had duly informed his father of the sincere desire of the Rajput general purport of which the young man was acquainted with him ; he on his side could play the game of bluff equally well. Hence his apparently sincere was playing with him ; he on his side could play the general purpose to the Rajput Emperor was preparing a reply to the Rana's letter, the wiser not to attempt to write. That the crafty Emperor not receiving any news from Delhi. He had judged it new home in safety, or what his father was thinking at word. He knew not whether the God had reached his and the other one's humiliation, but of Rajasthan not a capitive. Of titillate of court gossip he had plenty ; very little news of the outside world reached the

not be correct.

the current estimate of the Prince's character might slipped past, the Raja was beginning to wonder whether openly warned the Prince of his danger. As the weeks way responsible to Jlewarr for his safety, and had in truth Raja had given no pledge for his security—he was in no reluctance and understood his loquacity. After all, the declared design of escape. Bhim Singh resented his Raja not being except at the public durbars. The Raja had no wish to be implicated in the Prince's previous saw nothing except a loose. Of him the Prince

gathered from other sources.

ing to have been worried out of the Prince, but really he gave him all sorts of interesting information purport pleasure. And to impress his father with his astuteness Prince to confirm to etiquette and await the imperial Raja put informed his father of the sincere desire of the Rajput general purport of which the young man was playing

The night was not dark. Bhim Singh wondered whether anyone would notice him slipping into the water. The fatika was said over the standards and the tabuts; the ornaments and decorations were taken off the latter—and their wooden frameworks were cast into the water. The standards were then immersed. In-cense was burnt, the elegies on the martyrs were recited and the people turned homewards. Loitering behind, and the prince watched his opportunity, slipped noiselessly into the river and began to swim across, under the surface of the water. The prince had been found for him. They mounted in haste, for his men assembled there in joyous spirits. A spare horse had been found for him. They reached the village, he found Bhim Singh laughing to himself. "Now, Raja Shiam, motion.

Arrived at the rendezvous near a small village, he found his men assembled there in joyous spirits. A spare horse had been found for him. They mounted in haste, for his men assembled there in joyous spirits. A spare horse had been found for him. They reached the village, he found Bhim Singh told them that someone had, after all, watched him swimming in the river instead of returning with the others. There was every prospect, therefore, of their flight being detected and a hot pursuit set in with the others. Bhim Singh had, after all, been found for him. They mounted in haste, for his men assembled there in joyous spirits. A spare horse had been found for him. They reached the village, he found Bhim Singh laughing to himself. "Now, Raja Shiam, motion.

Prince back at the river, had detected him. Chagrin, one of the other processionals, happening to face far as long as he could. Unluckily, to the Prince's surprise back at the river, had detected him. The prince had been found for him. They mounted in haste, for his men assembled there in joyous spirits. A spare horse had been found for him. They reached the village, he found Bhim Singh laughing to himself. "Now, Raja Shiam, motion.

ever and soon with most convincing glee.  
was a tall figure with a black beard who beat his breast loudest wailers for the deaths of Ali and his two sons beyond the city confines towards the river. One of the along through the streets of that quarter and so out On the tenth night it duly left the Delhi gate, wound Fortunately Aurangzeb did not prohibit the procession. behind.

luckily, Llunderbolt had gone lame and had been left own horse he would have to leave it in the citadel; to go. In any case, that risk must be taken. As for his procession from the citadel, if the Emperor allowed one The others were to distinguish themselves and join the procession to the river bank. He himself would be with the done on the night before the Jumahram procession. The Rajputs' chances of escape. They were to go across the river and wait at a certain rendezvous. This was to be hearding whose horses they were, would be only too glad to take a bribe and let them go, for this would reduce the number of them should distinguish themselves as four or five of them should distinguish themselves as four. Prince. On Bhim Singh's advice it was arranged that a wild dash for it if only they could get hold of their forbidden to leave the city and were thinking of making his Ranawat escort. He learnt that they had been enabled to get into touch with Jagat Singh, the captain throughout this intermediary, Bhim Singh was at last Emperor's clutches, Bhim Singh won him over.

rest of his life and enable him to travel far out of the world would keep Jumahram Ali in luxury for the which sounded his man. By the gift of two jewels, the price he could get a suitable disguise. Very carefully he across his brain. Here was his chance of escape if only

Kabul. The fortress that had stood so long a siege by long experience of difficult warfare in the province of had been surprised by Sultan Azam, whose men had had fallen and received augal garrison. Even Chitor overwhelemed strngth. Fortress after fortress had the eastern provinces had his armies moved down in fate. From Ajmer in the north and from Agra and from Marwar had been overrun—the Rajahs driven into the mountains—and now Mewar was to experience a similar Marwa once for all. The letter still ranked in his bosom. Rana once for all, the letter still ranked in his bosom. Lord of Hindustan was determined to crush the impudent host, an inviolatory compliment to his Rajput foe. The from the Punjab and the home provinces—truly a mighty Alampur brought his armies, from Bengal, from Kabul, From all parts, except as yet from the Deccan, had The Rana's strategy promised ultimate success.

ambush was great.

In the month of Phalguna the previous year, how different it had all been. The Rana and his chiefs had enjoyed their annual Ahara and boar feast; the land was at peace. Now the hunters were the hunted. The Rajahs were scattering out their foe, their more experienced leaders not relishing the idea of penetratting the mountain fastnesses. The guns which had given them the victory in so many of the pitched battles on the plains could not be taken into the mountains without much difficulty, and the risk of their sudden capture by the plains.

In the month of Phalguna the previous year, how different it had all been. The Rana and his chiefs had enjoyed their annual Ahara and boar feast; the land was at peace. Now the hunters were the hunted. The Rajahs were scattering out their foe, their more experienced leaders not relishing the idea of penetratting the mountain fastnesses. The guns which had given them the victory in so many of the pitched battles on the plains could not be taken into the mountains without much difficulty, and the risk of their sudden capture by the plains.

So it was agreed between Sultan Akbar and Tahawwar  
were so desparate.

roke them. Even so I lost some guns ; their charges  
up a tremendous fight. 'Twas only my artillery that  
gads, why—for the master of that—all her vassals put  
over Marwar was no joke. Rani Kormdevi and Dur-  
end at the bidding of his chief. I tell you my expedition  
well know, will take on any odds and fight to the bitter  
ting his head into a hornets' nest. The Rajput, as you  
the Emperor, in his overweening pride of numbers, run-  
and, if he will hearken to my advice once again, prevent  
the job in time to come over to this side of the mountains,  
ablest and most trusted commanders, "this lucky I finished  
, Sultan," replied Tahawwar Khan, one of Akbar's  
and smashing temples ?

this to one who has just come from overrunning Marwar  
and erect mosques upon the sites. But—why detail all  
commissioned us to do, level the shrines with the ground  
up the idols of Krishna and Rukmini as His Majesty has  
We will ourselves go in with fifty thousand men, smash  
position ; it reminds me of the crocodile's open mouth.  
much like a trap—this tempting absence of serious op-  
his sacred person within the Girwa. To me it looks too

## AKBAR'S COMMISSION

### CHAPTER X

many battles against his brothers in their struggle for the throne. Twice had his cause seemed irretrievably lost, but he had stood his ground and refused to turn from the field. Luck had always seconded his brave feet. Within the long hall was the pure marble figure of the Emperor though he were, with the whole world at his feet. It was impossible that Deities with such a record of victory should perish at the bidding of a mortal—mighty Gods impeded their own destruction. The histories of the past had sustained her simple faith. It had ever been her constant inspiration. The previous princes had set in the wall of the temple court by previous tablets come here to pray in solitude. The black marble tablets Permbai was all alone in the shrine. Often had she

their country's foe.

timely warning of danger had helped them to drive away Goddess who once before, in a vision to her father, by eyes in earnest prayer and supplication to the guardian of the image of Durga Mata with folded hands and uplifted the pass of Kumbhalmer, a maiden was standing before the need. High on the mountains, on a bluff overlooking But their Gods did not desert them in their dark hour in the one God whose prophet Muhammed is.

Tahawwar Khan smashed to pieces Eklinga, the tutelary deity of the Rana's house. Thus should these imudels be taught that in idols is no hope, no succor; but only Khan were to go in and possess the valley. The Sultan was instructed to make it his first care to destroy the idol of Krishna now at Nathdwara on the Bansas, whilst Azam at Chitor guarding his rear. Akbar and Tahawwar decided to await events at the Debari pass, with Sultan However, His Majesty was convinced at last. He resolved to face his destiny where he stood.

Twice had his cause seemed irretrievably lost, but he had stood his ground and refused to turn from the field. Luck had always seconded his brave

Tahawwar Khan had no easy task to convince Alamgir that it was the better policy for his Imperial Majesty to venture into the valley, but rather to wait until it had been secured and then pass in triumphantly to occupy the Rana's beautiful capital. Alamgir never lacked courage. He would never have been what he now was had he not shown a mingling bravery in the

walk in and possess them and work your will whilst you may. Walk in and possess them and work your will whilst you may. , and the riches of the City of Surise are yours. Muughhal, , A few miles more, he seemed to say to the passes. , A few miles more, he seemed to say to the Dehlwars invitingly open the door at the Debari and the Dehwara he hoped they would do. For this reason he had left so thoroughly the valley of Udaipur to the mountains, which threatened their rear should they venture westwards through the hills and jungles from the Malwa plateau. Here he was in great strength, watching his chance of falling upon the left flank of his mighty antagonists and of intercepting their line of communication through the difficult Chappan bridge of communications south of the Girwa, cut intricate Naiin defile to the south east of the Girwa, cutting that rich province. The Rana himself was posted at the enemy, should they attempt this difficult route from Durgadas and the Rathors were holding the hills to the south of Kumbhalmer and keeping touch with Gujarat, Jai Singh was posted on the northern crests of that range, been ordered to Kewra and other villages in the Aravallis. His people and all their moveable possessions had little. He was playing the part of the open-mouthed crocodile. These fortresses were not more strongly held.

that these fortresses were not more strongly held. ever, all part of the mounting strategy of Rana Raj Singh the great Akbar had speedily succumbed. It was, how-

The Prince saw the good sense of this and remembered  
the saying, "Haste makes waste". A few minutes sufficed.  
On his way he was to collect as many hill bowmen as  
he could find within easy call. Bamboorafts were to  
be hastily put together, and a long bamboo bier upon  
moving the car. Hundreds of men had not been able  
to move it a few months earlier. This had filled all with  
astonishment. Over other sandy or boggy parts the car  
had been safely, if slowly, dragged, thanks to the Rana's  
foresight in having timber felled to place beneath the

lose the day. His appointed task and you may succeed. Rashness will  
Plan out your action first, let those with you know each  
the dark. Alone you cannot accomplish your desire,  
, Prince, said he, take thought before you leap into  
off towards the gate.

The Thakur caught him by the arm as he was darting  
valley.

May all the transgressions of Akbar's might host be  
upon my head if I do not prevent it! Up, Thakur, up,  
there's no time to lose. Sultan Akbar, I know, is in the  
The Prince seized his sword and buckler, exclaiming  
in this impetuous manner when deeply moved:

"By the sin of the sack of Chitor, this shall not be!  
Both looked at her with astonishment; her face was all  
aglow with unexpressed excitement. Breathlessly she  
gasped out her story.

She found him in earnest talk with Prince Bhim.  
Both looked at her with astonishment; her face was all  
aglow with unexpressed excitement. Breathlessly she  
gasped out her story.

to seek her farther the Thakur.

her gratitude. Then she hastened away with all speed

When Premabai awoke to a sense of her surroundings  
the rising moon was filling the shrine with a silvery  
light. Bowing low before the Goddess she poured out  
her vision faded. Such was the mes-  
and bring him to my sanctuary'. Do thou, my devout worshipper, hasten to this rescue  
is in peril. The hungry Asura comes to seize him.  
sky as the sword's point moved across. God Krishna  
here framed themselves against the rapidly darkening  
pointing downwards towards Natahdwara. Letters of  
she saw a flaming sword dash in the Goddess's hand  
Gazing intently at the glorious vision of radiant beauty,  
that her sincere devotion was about to be rewarded.  
earthly radiance shone about her. Premabai knew now  
the citadel on the very peak of the mountain. An un-  
until she rested above the Brahma's, cloud palace, within  
human, the Goddess floated through the still evening air  
to her prayer. Assuming a port that was more than  
she fell into an ecstasy, and therein received an answer  
So long and so imploredly did Premabai plead that

me!

my devotion by deeds. Hear me, great Goddess, hear  
servant a word—a promise. Show me a way to prove  
have I prayed, but thou hast not spoken. Give thy true  
O Jalandra Devi, arise and help! Often have I fasted, oft  
this fair land of Jlewara such impious sacrifice. Arise!  
images of our Gods and destroyed their shrines. Spare  
already done much mischief, how he has broken the  
this dark hour. Thou seest how the wicked Asura has  
, O mother of the Gods, succour now thy country in

the devout maiden who spoke so pleadingly.

seemed to be listening to the half-whispered prayers of  
flowers had been reverently placed before her. She

On the bamboo litter borne on the shoulders of eight  
sturdy mountaineers the God was being hurried to the  
water's edge. A shout arose. Bhim Singh looked  
toward—there to his left came a compact body of Muslim  
horsemen two hundred strong charging down to cut off their  
retreat to the river. Meanwhile his own main body was  
hotly engaged repelling determined attacks from the  
village on the further side of the shrine. The Rajputs

already to charge any that attempted to storm the sacred  
precincts. To one side his horsemen were drawn up  
as aces, To a short time. On the captured ridge, however, the  
deadly, was kept up by the remnant of the 'split-ear  
mud-walls a desultory matchlock fire, more noisy than  
He wheeled his men about to the shrine. From the low  
Bhim Singh had no intention of charging the ridge.

survivors were soon re-formed and reinforced.  
The slaughter amongst their scattered groups was terrible  
of the shrine, they had become careless of their formation.  
Thinking that the matchlock men were the sole defenders  
to charge the foe. The Muslims did not expect them.  
They swam their horses across the stream and,ighted  
by the friendly moon, dashed through the village  
There was no time for further argument. Rapidly  
was but obeying the Goddess's command.

He remonstrated with her. She replied simply that she  
to see her, for he had no idea that she was coming too.  
the sound. She urged on the Prince, who was astonished  
It was Premabai's sharp ear that had first detected  
appointed.

to his support from across the river. Nor was he dis-  
trusited that the noise of gunfire would bring someone  
strongly held. Thus had he gained valuable time. He

the other to give the impression that the ridge was the ridge, had moved his men rapidly from one end to the two hundred men along the tableland summit of the enemy for no little time. Their commander, posted up a good night; their ascetic militiamen with the *Kunphar* logi. These ascetic militiamen had Akbar's men, who had overcome the stout resistance of long sheltering ridge to the east was swarming with moonlight. Would they reach it in time? Already the Two hundred yards away the shrine lay battled in were moored.

Simplicity near a steep part of the right bank, where trees and shrubs came close to the water's edge, the ruts moved rapidly down the stream, propelled by long poles that day had noted two large bands of rafters that about these foothills. A short way below their descent he had taken Salimbar's advice and learnt his way and keeping up with the horsemen. Low glad he was fitted like ghosts amongst the trees, taking short cuts but silently along with his cavalry; one hundred Bhils on one of the Thakur's sure-footed horses moved rapidly moonlight was checked with deep shadows, Bhim Simplicity along the wooded left bank of the Banas, where the built.

should come and a temple worthy of him could be God was housed in a temporary shrine till better times thoughts had perforce turned to sterner matters. The car was left for the time being where it had stuck. Glen's chosen by the God himself for his future abode. So the all their efforts. It was clear that this was the spot two and twenty miles away from the city, it had defied wheels. Built at Nathdwara, on the banks of the Banas,

A little farther up stream they crossed to the opposite bank. The rafts were abandoned, and the God and his rescuers were soon lost to view amidst the trees.

Adored.

The other raft, come to the rescue of the man she now the arm. Again had Premabai, who had jumped onto beneath. An arrow was sticking through his ribs under from the lofty bank with a splash into the clear water somersault the archer made as he came tumbling down a raft along. He laughed still louder at the ridiculous that after all he should meet his death as a coarse polling

The Prince laughed loud. It amused him to think

yards away, aiming another shaft straight at him. There on the bank an archer was standing, a few short a ringing metallic sound. Bhim Singh looked up.

Into the pole between his hands an arrow struck with

—but the stream was against them.

all their might. The raft was beginning to gather speed to the pole and steadied him. Together they poled with balance and about to follow him. Bhim Singh sprang dead into the water. The other man was losing his

With a splash one of the pole men at the stern fell

reached the farther bank.

arrows upon the swimming Rajputs. Many, alas ! never and were wildlyirling matches and discarding to be able to swim across. The enemy had rallied again Bhim Singh, whose horse had been too severely wounded

jumpled down after it, followed by the priests and by  
On to the raft the bier was lowered. The bearers  
and saved the day at the most critical moment.  
She it was who had brought them across by swimming,  
short intervals and directed by the intrepid Perimabai,  
contingent of the , lords of the passes , drawn up at  
down to the water. Along the bank he found the Bhil  
turmed and fled. The Prince and his men rode rapidly  
stand this short-range arrow any longer. They could not  
The Jalisilis had lost their leaders. They could not  
in the bowmen's attack.

in the now confused mass only when he noticed a hill  
his sword, the Prince wheeled his men to one side, clearing  
derous indeed was the arrow hill that, with a wave of  
volley of deadly arrows rained upon them. So utter-  
were seen to reel in their saddles and fall. Volley after  
in utter desperation ranged the foe, many of the latter  
Yet it came. As they were about to hurt themselves  
from him.

, abandonee of the field; He did not really expect help  
lary deity. Krishn, he knew, was nicknamed Krishn,  
sooner than in any God, save, perhaps, Kalki in his tut-  
as that of Perimabai. He trusted in his own right arm  
did not expect to survive. His faith was not so strong  
clanmate, to charge and impede the oncoming foe. He  
save them, turmed his small force, a score of Razanaوات  
within a stone's throw of the bank to arouse himself and  
himself. He himself, calling aloud upon the God now  
again the left bank as well as they could, each man for  
precocerated signal that his men were to draw off to  
The Prince whistled thrice, a long shrill whistle, a  
to swarm with Jalisilis shouting , Dii, Dii,

were seriously outnumbered. The whole place seemed



Together they ascended the marble stairs to the splendid building beneath its lofty dome crowned with a gilded crescent. In the court they passed the tomb of a Sultan of Ilahamad sat. Beneath the dome within the

and there was a wide-spreading tamariid. A little and gardens were gay with parterres of flowers; here shaded by graceful palmrya and dark cypress trees. In, they passed through silent orange and lemon groves. He was accompanied by Tahawwar Khan. Dismbarak. One of the wooded isles in the middle of Lake Pichola. Udaipur, Akbar had rowed across to the Jagmandir on his father Jahanigar he was given asylum by the Rana of Shah Jahan, when as Prince Khurram in revolt against Shamed by curiosity to see the abode of his grandfather enter.

Word had been sent to Jalamgar that he might safely places. This was a bivouac not to be left in hurry. were at their ease, roaming through the deserted of this ill-gotten loot should leave the valley. They swam through the mouth of his high priest that none the Sultan's content. They did not know that Eklinga had the Rana's empty city. His men had plundered to their hearts' content. This had taken possession of

## A GAME OF CHESS IS INTERRUPTED

### CHAPTER XI





THE TWO PALACES, UDAIPUR.

*[Photo, Bourne and Shepherd, India.]*



, Barely, horribly badly. My face and neck still feel the stings of his guardian insects.,

, Insects? Well, I suppose a handful of lightening moths may fitly be called insects, but I see no worms or scratches on your face and neck.,

, Nay, they were worse than a few monks. They swarmed in myriads like locusts darkening the sky. But listen, I shall tell you all in order. I first attempted the entrance to the narrow valley from the north, but found the road passing through a deep gorge guarded by a strong gate. The soldier monks were ready for us; heaps of loose rocks were piled up on the heights overlooking the roads. It was a death-trap. So, detaching some men to keep these monks in check I made a long but a massive portal barred the way to the shrine. A couple of elephants soon butted that in for me. That should teach them to put spikes on their gates in future. At the shrine itself some three hundred yards further down the valley the old priest stood waving his arms and calling down curses. I told my gunners to put a few cannon balls into the temple and give him good cause to dance about like a lunatic.

, That was my mistake. The noise of it disturbed the ravine over our heads we bolted out of that accursed tremendous stampede, I can assure you! With our horses and men were thrown into utter confusion. A huge like escaping steam from huge cauldrons. Elephants, to the north. Down they swarmed—the very air hissed black masses that were hived on the rocks of the gorge to the north.,

through. They would take the risk of being caught from within to prevent Aurangzeb forcing his way into the valley. The three passes were to be closely blockaded by their hands and draw off to the eastern barrier of their the very considerable booty that had already fallen into the night, it was settled that they should gather together to continue who, with true Rajput impetuosity, wished to continue So, in spite of some ardent spirits flushed with victory was his special privilege to defend to the death.

position to find himself attacking the Suraj Pol while it with a smile agreed that it would put him into a curious point. Chondawat Rawat Ruttan Singh of Salumbar in numbers. Akbar must be left in the dark upon this before daylight disclosed to the enemy their inferiority back of trained gunners. It were better to draw off few they had captured, and these could not use for their successes hitherto. They had no guns except the in number. It was only by surprise that they had gained Their forces were little more than half those of Akbar damage to their palaces on the ridge and within the city. Ekkilgarh was taken, the enemy guns could do untold Street fighting was not at all to their liking. Until fort that it was impracticable to attack their own city. In a brief council of war the Rajput leaders decided of danger.

In a brief council of war the Rajput leaders decided that had first aroused the chess players to a sense that had found it too strongly held. It was the guns of this tacitment to capture the fortified hill of Ekkilgarh. He The Rawat of Salumbar had gone with a strong de- in check. Woungt have until the troops from the city held them impetuously the clans charged into the camps, and their camps with the Rajputs close on their heels.

It was Jai Singh and his brother who, coming down from the mountains with a force of fifteen thousand men, into confusion that the Rana had an easy march in. Attacked on both sides by forces of unknown strength, and not able to use their guns to advantage in the sand, So successfully had they been in throwing them off, that the Rana had had an easy march in. They had overrun them easily and had pushed on to attack the forces blocking the ingress through the Nai defile. So successively had they been in throwing them off, that the Rana had had an easy march in.

They had taken the enemy outposts completely by surprise. It was Jai Singh and his brother who, coming down shelter of the city walls, formed outside, and the broken troops drew off to the order was restored, and the broken troops drew off to the made; the Rajputs were held in check. Some sort of in the ruins of their camps. Charge after charge was into the isolated groups who were fighting desperately these that they were hastening. Their arrival put heart formed outside. It was to the two most important of losses of men and equipment in the several large camps an attack on the city itself. The Rana would not like approaches to the city walls. They had no reason to fear guns amongst the chain of small fortresses guarding all north. Fortunately for them they had distributed their east and Talawwar Khan from the Hathi Pol on the walls issued forth, the Sultan from the Suraj Pol on the body-guard troops and other contingents within the city dashed down to the body-guard lines, and ministering the their attackers. The Sultan and Talawwar Khan at a disadvantage in not knowing the terrain so well as there was not much moonlight, and the Juhals were eastern frontier fortresses.

Take things easily for a spell after their long and arduous marches from Bengal and the tough fighting at the

RAM-BURKI, OR THE BRAHMIN-BROTHER  
CHAPTER XII

For many months past Rai Kormandevi had been in-  
portuned by Durgadas to remove herself and her infant  
monastery on Mount Abu. She would not listen.  
Kumbhalgarh seemed to her the strongest fortresses ever  
built. Rai Kumbha's stronghold defied capture.  
Behind its massive walls and towers, seven hundred feet  
above the pass that it commanded, and behind its seven  
gates, on the very pinnacle of the mountain, the Cloud  
Palace of the Rana was surely far beyond the reach of  
any foe however strong. "Where," she argued, "could  
a safer refuge be found?" By direct attack perhaps  
it was impracticable, but to slow starvation it might  
succeed as many another stronghold had done.  
That was Durgadas' constant reply. Driven out of  
Marwar, with the imperial armies approaching in over-  
whelming strength on all sides, the Rani had at last  
hills were still unbroken by the invaders' foot. There,  
To Mount Abu then she had been escorted whilst the  
Princess Ambika, given in.

To stay behind or to part with her beloved companion  
of a trusty nurse. But she herself had utterly refused  
with many misgivings, she had left her Ajit in the care  
hills were still unbroken by the invaders' foot. There,  
To Mount Abu then she had been escorted whilst the  
Princess Ambika.

To Gogunda, then, some twenty miles north-west of  
Perry. To Gogunda, then, some twenty miles north-west of  
the city they were reluctantly leaving, the Ilustims  
directed their march, hoping to cross the mountains by  
the Sadi Pass some six miles to the south of the Hatchi-  
gura Nal or Elephant Pass below Kumbhalmer.

They had but was not attacked. The Rajputs had no wish  
to impede their westward movement. In some battle-  
nected valley the whole army would soon be an easy  
prey. They had but was not attacked. The Rajputs had no wish

Tahawwar Khan was in command of the strong rear-

come to them from their chivalrous foe.

The sick and wounded were left behind. No harm would  
ever hope of reprieve before the weather broke.  
rainy season was yet some months ahead, and there was  
much of their camp equipment was severely felt, but the  
whole force put into a fair marching order. The loss of  
organised, the guns removed from the fortresses and the  
However, all went well at first. The troops were re-

mistake.

Tahawwar Khan urged the Sultan to fight his way  
back to the imperial forces beyond the passes. But  
Akbar, fearing that his troops had been too much shaken  
and disorganised, and quite uncertain as to the numbers  
of the Rajputs between him and his father, rejected the  
advice and determined to effect a junction with the  
army in occupation of Jalarwar. It was to prove a fatal

mountains, he would be delivering himself into their  
hands. Between two fires and would wait and see what Akbar  
would do. If he decided to move westwards into the





THE FORTRESS OF KUMBHALMER FROM SOUTH, UDAIPUR.

[Photo, Bourne and Shepherd, India.]

Rahat, allowed feelings of wounded vanity to overcome his loyalty. A man of overweening self-conceit, he had aspired to the hand of Princess Ambalka. He and his contingent had, with the Rana's consent, relieved the Rao of Bedla and his men in the duty of forming part of the Rani's body-guard. From a distance he had won-shipped the fair Ambalka. In time he had found opportunities, in the performance of his duties, to speak over the mountains had of necessity been relaxed. Her shyness he mistook for sure signs of affection returned. But Ambalka could not bear the sight of him. The Rani disliked him because of his addiction to opium, over-indulgence in which had once caused an incom-venient delay in their journey.

A few days previously he had formally requested the Rani for the hand of her ward. That astounded lady had given him a curt refusal. The memory of her manner and her few scurril words still rankled. Over-vengeful she was towards Akbar's approaching army. Such were his thoughts and such his feelings as he made his solitary way towards Akbar's approaching army. He fell in with the rear-guard. Of this he was glad; had he met Akbar himself he might have been tempted to betray the Rajput designs. His treachery was not so black as that. His real desire was to avenge himself upon the Rani alone. The future could then take care of itself.

Such were his thoughts and such his feelings as he made his solitary way towards Akbar's approaching army. He fell in with the rear-guard. Of this he was glad; had he met Akbar himself he might have been tempted to betray the Rajput designs. His treachery was not so black as that. His real desire was to avenge himself upon the Rani alone. The future could then

On their return, within a dozen miles of their destination, they found their road blocked by the army of Sultan Akbar, which was slowly penetrating through the nation, till Jai Singh's forces returned. He must wait till Jai Singh's forces returned. The Thakur of Ghanerao sent word from Kumbhalmer that his daughter Premabai was ready to show him a most secret hiding-place in a hill temple cut high in the rocky side of a narrow ravine a few miles south of the Sadi Pass. This refuge was approachable only by a steep winding path and was well hidden by shrubs and trees. A safer spot and a more convenient one for a temporary refuge could not be found.

The Rani agreed. Premabai accordingly led them to the spot. Every arrangement possible was made for the royal ladies' comfort and a small guard was posted near the spot. It was undesirable to attract undue attention. The guard was placed there to prevent mischief from plunder friend or foe alike if they had a chance to do so. Though they were now fighting for the Rajputs, the latter, knowing their unscrupulous nature, never trusted them.

Meanwhile Durgadas and the other chieftains who had joined forces could capture him and his whole army. They were not to prevent Akbar's entry to the mountain tunneling on a route more to the north of the Jalis. Reached them that Jai Singh and his brother were received the escort rode on to Kumbhalmer. News soon formed the escort rode on to Kumbhalmer. News soon reached them that Jai Singh and his brother were received the escort rode on to Kumbhalmer. News soon

be his portion. He would take special precautions into an ambush, woe betide him ! Instant death would harm in trying. And it the Thakur was leading him loosened his tongue and give out valuable information, he him, he might prevail upon the traitor ungratefully to loosen his tongue and give out valuable information, he piqued by curiosity and thinking that, if he humoured him, He wondered what might be his ultimate motive. After all, his alliance was not to Jodhpur but to reason the Thakur had given seemed rather insipidient, still Bahawar Khan was doubtful of him. The

must take this risk.

heved ! Rapidly he had decided in his mind that he to disclose. Yet, her word or his, which would be where this might be, she would, of course, utterly refuse him as one of her escort to a distant bidding-place ? his mother ? Could he expect the Rani not to denounce reason to suppose that the infant Prince was not with there ? Could he convince the Queen that he had no when Bahawar Khan discovered that Ajit was do ill to swallow. Inflamed man ! What would he do him of his hope, Unsuccessful treachery is a bitter as he had said, make war upon women, and so cheat on and so great the fear least Bahawar Khan should not, lying to treachery : so great was the passion urging him thus, in spite of his oath, Thakur Goculdas added

distinction in the Emperor's Court.

the Prince raised, as his father was, to high honour and accuse him of all sorts of crimes. I should like to see too suspicious of His Majesty and only too ready to his Guadianhip ! My fellow-countrymen are altogether the Emperor resolute exceedingly to get Prince Ajit into place. I have come direct to seek you. But will not

It was by the merest chance I lighted upon their hiding-place up-to-date. Rememember I have just come from a distant post and know not exactly how matters stand. His country, replied, Well, Khan Sahib, your news is too far, and not desirous of betraying the whole cause of Thakur to give reasons why hostages might prove invaluable. But the Thakur, realising that he had gone with this kind of bluff did he try to draw out the women.

With counter-marching. Besides we do not make war and poor soldiers that have to do all the tedious marching an Emperor for having an easy time of it. This pleasant duty of garrisoning that lovely place. Thus the valley of Udaipur and has relieved us of the value of hostages? Aloud he said, Hostages? What reected Thakawar Khan. Why does he dwell on the I wonder if I can get anything out of this fellow?

Important hostages might prove invaluable. Your rear-guard dispositions. The possession of such miles to the south of your main route need not upset excursion to a spot not much more than half-a-dozen could capture the ladies within a very short time. This guns such as the swivel-pieces you carry on the camels effort. Three or four hundred men with a few small , Khan Sahib, consider what you gain by so small an

serious attention to what he was saying. Not until he had taken the most solemn oath of , The Khan was for some time very doubtful of his good faith. was escorted to the commander's tent. Thakawar until he had thrown down his weapons. Unarmed, he taken as a spy. But the sentries would not let him pass

she trusted they would be in time !  
any rate bring a rescue party from Kumbhalmer. How  
find him, but she was doubtful. However, she could at  
accept the dangerous mission. She hoped she might  
him, she pushed these thoughts aside and  
unspeaken love for the fair girl, in her own great love for  
But when she remembered the Prince's open though  
opponents.

never realised that men so often fall in love with their  
Was she altogether worthy of the Prince ? Premabai  
sheltered existence. She was a timid little thing, too.  
in a zenana. Ambalka, on the contrary, had a  
independent open-air life, and had not been cooped up  
Thanks to an indulgent father she had lived a free and  
was because she was so accustomed to look after herself.  
her bracelet-brother, her champion ? She supposed it  
Why had she herself not thought of making Bhim Singh  
loved should receive such a mark of esteem from another !  
feelings were at war. O cruel fate ! That the man she  
When Premabai understood what the mission was her  
Ambalka asked her to go.

of the mountain as Premabai. Colly and hesitatingly  
way. No one had such knowledge of this intricate part  
the usual messenger on such an errand, would lose his  
this time. Who could she send ? The family priest,  
thought to be somewhere in their neighborhood by  
a likened bracelet to Rani's consent, Ambalka proposed to send  
With the Rani's assent, Ambalka proposed to send  
were sufficiently awake to the seriousness of the situation.  
ever doubted it. Still, she was rejoiced to see that they  
sign that they would fight to the death. Not that she  
taking a final farewell. This, Premabai knew, was a good  
still upon them, they fell toembracing one another as men

on hearing the news, with the times of their daily opinion to give warning. The small guard was assembled and, aid and take post at the head of the ravine awaiting the signal to shoot, Premabai dashed back to the rock-temple calling on the Bhils to summon their followers to their hundred men.

She saw their camels with the guns. Altogether she reckoned their probable strength to be about five to six at length espied the Muslimes crossing an open glade. Following the bowmen, Premabai from a lofty rock

jungle in their direction.

All unconscious of approaching danger, Premabai was wandering a mile or two from the ravine, in search of a party of the enemy who was working its way through the two Bhil bowmen came running up to tell her that a certain wild boar that the Razi was so fond of, when

with hair scorched or tails singed.

Hoping of little fires that brought them to their feet, they lay down and refused to budge. It was only the trying to make them climb like goats? More than once plains they understood, but where was the sense of horses. The camels grunted disconsolately. Sandy notice. The men had often to dismount and walk their the jungle as much as possible, not wishing to attract the march was difficult, for he led them through and down aile for seven miles in a south-western direction. Still unarmed, Goculdas led the little force up hill

mediately in the direction indicated by the Thakur. In half-an-hour's time, The scouts were sent out and four camels with swivel-guns to be ready to move Redgeeting thus, he gave orders for four hundred men

best scouts on all sides.

against falling into an ambush. He would send out his

The Raini was kept fully informed of the progress of the fight by her faithful servants. She realised that her escort could not hold out much longer against the determined attacks of the enemy on her side of the ravine, whilst they were also losing men from the guns that had begun to enfilade them from the other side. She was, however, determined that her beloved ward should not fall into Muslim hands. Accordingly, sum- moning the Captain of the escort, she told him of a rescue that she had thought of as a last desperate measure if commanding officer of a famous soldier, it she came down from her but honourable treatment should be shown to her, the together. She would trust to his word that nothing had ceased for and allowed her to get her palli-bearers commander saying that she would come down to him at any time. He was to take a message to the Muslim that she had thought of as a last desperate measure if commanding officer of a famous soldier, it she came down from her but honourable treatment should be shown to her, the together. She would trust to his word that nothing had ceased for and allowed her to get her palli-bearers

watched the approach of the enemy, and distinctly saw the Thakuri of Banerji pointing out to the Muslim leader the exact position of their retreat. The Bhils did their best to prevent the Muslims from going there little brass guns into action, but, in spite of some casualties, the Muslims succeeded in driving the bowmen away and in holding them off at a safe distance. The four small guns were dragged up into the rocky ledges of the face of the ravine directly opposite the interior of the cave-temple and opened a terrifying fire. The ladies retreated to the interior of the cave to avoid the splinters of rock that were now flying about at its entrance and even occasionally finding their way inside. The few Rajput defenders were valiantly holding the rugged path to the cave itself and repulsing the desperadoes who had come to sweep them aside.

were in great danger. Piercing through the bushes they  
During Premabai's absence the Rani and Ambalka  
exhausted grit by his side.  
diced by nearly two miles. This was a boon to the  
than that of Premabai; the distance was thereby re-  
advantage. His knowledge of short cuts was better even  
How lucky for him that he had used that time to such  
come upon accidentally in his roaming over the hills.  
Well did he remember the rock-temple which he had  
would impede them in this difficult cross-country race.  
hastened on foot with Premabai to the rescue. Horses  
could muster on the spot, close upon three hundred, he  
the positions assignd to him. With all the men he  
near him what had happened, so that they might fill up  
hanging down. Hastily he explained to the chieftains  
he bound it round his wrist with the little coloured tassels  
How his eyes lighted up when he saw it! Reverently

from fleeing gave him the bracelet from the Princess.  
Rani's danger, and with an air of indifference she was far  
the very man she was seeking. She told him of the  
By a lucky chance the weary Premabai came upon  
heights. Soon they would have the reward of patience.  
a sound was made by those watching them from the  
Sultans advance-guard were flying into the pass. Not  
tion he had ever received from an enemy. Already the  
the best advantage to give Akbar the warmest reception  
the pass and arranging where to place their contingents  
The Rajput chieftains were out on the hills surveying  
at last, within sight of Sadri Pass.

jungle, after what seemed an eternity of time, she came,  
sore and bleeding from her wild scramble through the  
where the hills were already silently gathering. Foot-  
away then she sped around the head of the ravine

The struggle was short but intense. It was only ended when Taha war Khan and a score of others, running back and mounting their horses, repeatedly charged the Rajputs. They were now at a disadvantage. Bhim Singh fell wounded by a sword-cut in his left thigh. His men picked him up and retreated slowly, heavily fought, to the scrub jungle on the side of the ravine.

They saw the commander step forward most politely, doubtless with words of courteous excuse upon his lips. And then they saw him spring back, draw his sword and engage furiously with the armed warriors who had leaped out of the palkis. Men were falling right and left. Shouts and curses broke the stillness. The few Rajputs were being surrounded. Not a man would have survived had not Bhim Singh and his men burst upon their antagonists with the wildest of war-whoops.

"He told his men what he proposed to do. They worked their way most cautiously under cover to the lower end of their hill and waited breathlessly to see the rude surprise that was about to be sprung upon the enemy from the palkis, now almost at the bottom.

glimpse of what looked like a shield or a spear point in the last of the pallikas. Eagerly she pointed it out to the Prince. In a little while he saw it too, and then he noticed that there seemed to be more bearers than usual to each pallaki. It was clearly a ruse. Inside the pallikas were armed men, and no doubt spare arms for the bearers also. He decided to allow them to get right into the middle of the Muslims at the mouth of the ravine before hurling his men to the attack from the lower end of the hill where he stood. There it was much less precipitous and easier for a sudden swift onset.

forthwith, but Premabai's sharp eyes had caught that Bhim Singh was far dashingly down upon the enemy throughout the bushes.

Their difficult descent down the narrow winding path the reseuers saw five pallias issue from the cave and begin Singh's heart sank within him. And then to their horror lessly down the steep tracks as it all was over. Bhim to the bottom, the guards and guards jumping care opposite the cave the brass guns were being taken down Not a hill was to be seen. On the side of the ravine the Prince and Premabai reached the end of the ravine. The Rani's orders were being duly carried out when the cave-temple and guiding them to safety.

Taking Ambalka and her attendants unobserved out of Captain of the escort should hold himself responsible for packed away out of sight in each palli. Meanwhile the two men; the weapons of the bearers should also be except the last, wherein she herself would sit with palli down it. Three armed men were to squeeze into each and the consequent difficulty in conveying pallias safely unusual number because of the steepness of the path enemy, she declared, would suspect nothing from the number of bearers should be detailed to each palli; the hidings-places. Her instructions were that an extra man of her escort to fetch her five pallias from their On the return of her messenger the Rani ordered the too much delay.

At the same time requested the Rani's envoy not to allow little execution, readily gave the required pledge, and at glad to meet with such apparently easy success in his in which the Rani's promise was worded, but only too reference to the Rani's women nor the ambiguous way Tahawar Khan, not noticing the omission of any

retreat, the Rani, the Prince and some other wounded men were put into the palikas and borne up to the cave. Ambalika and the Captain had turned in their flight on hearing the increased noise of the fight, and to their immense relief had seen that rescue had come and that the enemy were retreating. They hurried back to the cave. Ambalika's joy at seeing the Rani safe and sound was unbounded; her distress at Bhim Singh's wound was very great. With tears in her eyes, she braced her again and again and thanked her in broken accents of sincere gratitude.

Bhim Singh heard the whole story of the fight in the ravine before his arrival. On his expressing great astonishment at one of the leading nobles of Leewar turning traitor, the Rani was obliged to tell him of her refusal of the Thakur's request for the Princess's hand. The Prince to understand a little how this black treachery grievedness of his own love for Ambalika enabled the Rani to conceive. He found himself actually pitying the captive noble.

Tahawwar Khan had enough. He had not bar-gained for a pitched battle. Dragging off the unlucky Goculdas, who was to experience great difficulty in convincing him that it was no preconcerted ambush, he retired. His retreat was unmolested after a mile

Bhim Singh was the bearer of this letter. Akbar through the depute of Jilwara.

gave him guides to conduct him out of the mountains deliver over to the Rana the traitor Goudas he would Sultan would promise, at the earliest opportunity, to permit the Mughal army to withdraw. Moreover, if the camels and all but two of the elephants, he would the surrender of the guns and their foreign gunners, On the upon Jai Singh considered in Akbar's protestations.

The upon Jai Singh confined in Akbar's prison trained.

betrayed him to the Emperor but had generously re-sponteman and no tyrannical fanatic. He might have for Akbar's sincerity and good faith. Akbar was a true in Dehli, Jai Singh consulted him. Bhim Singh touched knowing that he had been intimate with Sultan Akbar could sit in a saddle again if he went very quietly. brother returned to the camp. He had found that his Jai Singh hesitated. It was at this juncture that his giving trouble.

elsewhere. Sivaji and the unruly Maharatras were always to compel his father to draw off and turn his attention disapproved of the Emperor's unrelenting fanaticism, confidence and would stir up the Shiah faction, which disobeys his father. But he still enjoyed his father's Jai Singh, protesting that, being himself half a Rajput, In this predicament, Akbar opened negotiations with

on either side. famine should conquer for them. At the head of the pass and fighting from the rocky hills they contented themselves with holding the stockade halfway up the wall would prove a serious obstacle. pass to the attack. They knew that an old stone dam trees. The Rajputs did not themselves venture into the

hiddean his guns in the deserted Jain temples among the Akbar, indeed, after wasting much ammunition, had destruction. They were above the reach of gunnery. On both sides the Rajputs were hurling down death andplete the confusion and distress within. From the crests trepid Muslim commander had been driven back to com-  
out had been followed by the Prince. Each time the in-  
All Tashawwar Khan's strenuous efforts to cut his way felled timber. Jai Singh was blocking up the entrance.  
At the further end of this long wall, the natural rampart of the pass only to find himself completely hemmed in.  
had been allowed to penetrate unmolested into the heart of action six short miles away.

But exceedingly at his enforced absence from the scene being near his Prince, but his frightened spirit made him under the tender care of the royal ladies. He loved and in excellent health; his wound was healing rapidly his wounds by the side of their temple, Bhim Singh had rested monks by the rock-cut cells formerly the abode of Jain

### (1) Mountain Warfare

## THE RANA'S STAR IN THE ASCENDANT

### CHAPTER XIII

„Well, our bars are almost as bad. They laud the  
survived to be recalled ! „  
would take particular care not to mention how many  
his troops from that region.” Our patriotic historian  
by these words, „Then His Imperial Majesty recalled  
were permitted you would see all our defeats glossed over  
forbidden histories to be written of his doings, but it they  
of his armies again. You must know that Alzamgarh has  
I doubt whether my father will send me out in command  
together. I have not been exactly lucky in this war;  
you. You must invite me down here for a good shikar  
, Prince, as soon as peace comes I shall send them to

in that procession.

ritual, you see. They would have made queer mourners  
that lovely bird. I could not teach them the Shah  
sorry to leave your four-footed girls behind in Delhi, and  
him unfortunately. By the way, Sultan Sabib, I was  
I had such a chase after a tiger a few months ago; I lost  
centuries old. But look there! up that twisty ravine.  
image—that would have been very serious, for it is  
twice every year by heaven. Had you damaged the  
must tell you it is firmly believed that they are renewed  
away your mosque, and, as for the wheels of the car, I  
for the God; the river will doubtless overflow and wash  
the shrine was but a temporary one, and very inadequate  
, No matter, you need not have taken the trouble;  
lying on its side with the wheels completely broken.

I am sorry I had to carry out orders. I demolished  
After a brief silence the Sultan resumed.  
less tacticians? „  
hope to subjugate a nation whose women are such fear-

‘Was this really so ? How then can my father ever  
of Ghancoro,’  
the work of a devotee, the daughter of Thakur Gopinath  
, ‘Well, neither did I, to tell you the truth. That was  
bank.’

idea that you had posted skilled bowmen on the nearer  
We had no idea of being outflanked ourselves ; no  
being captured by the blank attack I sent against you.  
, ‘Verily and so he did. You were within an ace of  
snatched me out of your clutches.’

Let us rather put it the other way about—Krishna  
out of my clutches that night ? ’  
tell me, was it not you that so daringly snatched Krishna  
having overlooked that way of escape. But come now,  
was annoyed at his astuteness, that tricks of every kind,  
shall soon catch him again.” Nevertheless, I know he  
an unspeakable riddle. But to me he said, “No matter, we  
very minute ascended. Even to them he is most often  
betraying the secret emotion under to one or two of his  
. As he always does—without moving a muscle or

How did your father take the news ?  
thank you for your generosity in not betraying me.

You yourself did not, doubtless, of that I am sure. I  
even my astute father, misread your character.  
, you played a pretty trick upon us at Lelli ; ever young,  
, ‘Prime,’ he remarked, as they were leaving the pass,  
comparatively young.

When the conditions had been settled, Bhim Singh  
dreadly gave the necessary orders.  
accepted the stipulations contained therein, and imme-

mountains pursuing Akbar. His own army was strong enough to ensure the safety of his communications with his base at Ajmer. For some reason or other he chose to leave the Rana unmolested until it was too late.

The Rana decided to take the initiative. He waited a sufficient time to allow the victorious Jai Singh, Dungadas and the other chieftains on the Aravallis to come down and join him in the Udaipur valley. He rejoiced to see the captured guns and gunners, who had suffered battle of Mewar's successes. Killing the third boar, is how he expressed it. He reminded his chiefs of the good omens of their Ahastika festival in the previous year.

Everyone was confident of further success. He had determined to give battle and continue the war he had started at Udaipur, had formed by throwing a dam from the Udaisagar, the lake that Rana Uday Singh, the Aurangzeb's position was very strong. It stretched across a little stream in a gorge two miles south of the Debari Pass, for some miles along the northern bank of

the river Berach that has its source in this lake. In the dry season the Berach was a very intermittent stream, nevertheless, its bed of heavy sand was an obstacle. To the north of the river Berach was a very narrow bank of mudflats, but it was covered with low scrub, inter-

crops of broken rock. The many mud-walled villages scattered by numerous nullahs and dotted about with out-

, the north of the river. The country was fairly open and undulating, but it was covered with low scrub, inter-

crops of broken rock. The many mud-walled villages scattered by numerous nullahs and dotted about with out-

crops of broken rock. The many mud-walled villages scattered by numerous nullahs and dotted about with out-

crops of broken rock. The many mud-walled villages scattered by numerous nullahs and dotted about with out-

in the valley whilst Hai Singh's forces were in the Azam to attack the Rana, and risked another battle Debari Pass and Chitor. Aurangzeb should have sent Azam, whose armies occupied the space between the had been watching the Emperor and his son Sultan broke and suspended operations for a while. The Rana the earlier months of the year 1690 before the rains Nor was this the last disaster that befell Alamgir in

## (2) The Battle of the Berach

"forbidden the writing of history ;  
the troops from that region." It is as well Alamgir has , Here is a case," thought Bhim Singh, " of " a recall of him into this dangerous pass.

Ghaneerao, had moved to meet him and had invited Rao, of Khulnagar, and Gopinath Raut, Thakur of Daurwar to the relief of Sultan Akbar. Bikram Solanki Diler Khan and his troops who were hastening from Together they watched the pitiless annihilation of

very long and narrow Daulat Pass.  
him to the crest of the hill that formed one side of the his wound allowed him, joined Fremabai, who guided the Prince turned his horse and, going as quickly as

light, came quickly up this way."

"Prince, if you wish to see how my father managed a he heard a familiar voice calling him.

He had not proceeded far on his return journey when until Jhivatra was reached and the Prince took his leave. Thus they began the way with friendly conversation

them, that no boar had ever been killed before."

wild boar, you would have imagined, as you listened to least exploit to the skids. After I had skinned my first

At earliest dawn, hoping to catch the enemy asleep, the Rana opened the battle. During the hours of dark depression of the ground he had posted strong contingents of Bhil and Mera bowmen, to support the gunners of effective range. Between them and the guns in a line of heavy ordnance and fifteen horse-guns, to his side of the river. His horses were massed behind them out of heavy ordnance and fifteen horse-guns, to his side of the river. At earliest dawn, hoping to catch the enemy asleep, dramatic suddenness.

When all seemed over and the Rajputs were being driven back, apparently for the last time, with all their hopes of victory scattered beyond repair, the tide turned with this way and that throughout the livelong burning day. It proved a most desperate battle. Fortune swayed this way and that throughout the livelong burning day. When all seemed over and the Rajputs were being driven back, apparently for the last time, with all their hopes of victory scattered beyond repair, the tide turned with

such successes, were destined to carry them through. They did not know, on that memorable day, when they were fighting for their courage and elan, stimulated by recent warfare, as history shows, did not by any means always differ by many thousands! But success in Orenthal lie with the big battalions. The Rajputs were fighting for heart and home: their whole hearts were in the war-torn before him, as far as the Rana could learn. It was a mighty host not far short of a hundred thousand men, and he proposed to attack it frontally with a force such were the formidable dispositions of the Mughal army that lay before him, as far as the Rana could learn. It was a mighty host not far short of a hundred thousand men, and he proposed to attack it frontally with a force

mostly on the banks or forming part of the reserves with elephants also. The cavalry, however, were obviously probable that Alamgir had put all his available artillery in the Emperor's body-guard. It was considered highly probable that Alamgir had put all his available artillery in the front line.

horses were seen moving hither and thither and some main body of musketeers was posted here. Bodies of them from grit when not in use. Evidently then the muskets sometimes covered with red cloth to protect farther that he recollects having seen at Delhi the red bamboo staves. Both Singh was able to tell his hind these cameals they caught sight of what looked like recently captured. On the irregular rising ground beyond swivel-guns, some dozens of which Jai Singh had many camels lying down, and guessed that they were immediately behind this formidable line they noticed cavally between them.

linked together by chains of iron to bar the entrance of what they did not see was that all these pieces were elephants and about thirty lighter pieces of horse-artillery. Heavy ordnance that was drawn by bullock teams or they could judge there were some forty guns of the men, they saw this line of artillery in position. As far as only practicable crossing therabouts for large bodies of From a cordon of vantage in the hills surrounding the lake his scouts could gain a fair idea of Almaghir's dispositions. On the low ridge commanding the river bed, and the tactics on the low ridges behind the little river. Out-of-battle on the low ridges drew up this line to Chitor. He moved out of camp and drew up his army with scattered detachments keeping open the line troops on the west. On his left bank he had Azam's would prevent any formidable movement of enemy's position.

The Rana carefully reconnoitred his enemy's position. was a frontal one, he waited for several days in expectation of it. On the low ridge commanding the river bed, and the tactics on the low ridges behind the little river. Out-of-battle on the low ridges drew up his line to Chitor. He moved out of camp and drew up his army with scattered detachments keeping open the line troops on the west. On his left bank he had Azam's would prevent any formidable movement of enemy's position.

held in reserve, five miles to the east. There they were to cross the river at all costs and ride in upon the enemy's left bank. When their division began to take effect he would not likely to be very strong so far out on the bank. Crossing unless absolutely obliged. The opposition was not likely to be very strong so far out on the bank. They were not to use the guns to effect a crossing unless absolutely obliged. The opposition was held in reserve, five miles to the east. There they were to cross the river at all costs and ride in upon the enemy's left bank. This movement was not detected. It was skilfully bring over his main forces. When their division began to take effect he would not likely to be very strong so far out on the bank. The opposition was carried out, little bodies of horse moving off at intervals and taking all the cover afforded by trees and nullahs that they could find. The kettle-drums with them were silent, but on the other bank as it to meet them. The Rana's force themselves then made a feint attack, apparently intending to try a second chance of crossing in front of the guns. And so the morning wore on, with harmless manoeuvres of this nature. Alamgir felt secure enough. Even the rash and impetuous Rajputs, though he, were daunted. Their cavalry had thought better of attempting his right bank. On that side, at all events, they were not likely to do him much harm.

He did not know that Bhim Singh, at his own earnest entreaty, had been allowed to try a forlorn chance on that bank. Thousands of mountaineers and eight hundred Gossains had been sent with him during the night to move secretly round on the farther side of these hills to the forest-clad hills encircling the lake. His plan was to fall upon the enemy's right bank. His father had told and watch for the moment when he could most effectively to move secretly round on the farther side of these hills to the forest-clad hills encircling the lake. His plan was to fall upon the enemy's right bank. Bhim Singh, at his own earnest entreaty, had been allowed to try a forlorn chance on that bank. Thousands of mountaineers and eight hundred Gossains had been sent with him during the night to move secretly, had been allowed to try a forlorn chance on that bank. He did not know that Bhim Singh, at his own earnest entreaty, had been allowed to do him much harm.

the remaining five of the captured horses, now being force of thirty thousand men, a dozen camel-guns and Bijioli, three of the leading nobles of Mewar, to take a contingent he instructed Mokham Saktawat, Subbul

high loss.

This man across in the face of them without unnecessary turbed from an unexpected quarter, he could never take The Rana realised that, until the enemy guns were dispersed Alamgir was too far in the rear to notice much. At drastic punishment from their master the Emperor. At the former obliged to fight in greater earnest to escape of his enemy could silence most of the Rana's guns, were It was clear that at any moment the superior gunfire

distance with very considerable losses.

Came too deadly, and they had to retreat again to a safe towards the river bed. But the gunners aim now because of this bad shooting, moved his cavalry forward side were put out of action. The Rana, not realising the It was only by accident that one or two guns on either So, until they saw another target, they aimed badly.

The waste of good ammunition.

of ; the noise was supposed to be terrifying and to justify a battle with a cannonade if one had any guns to speak their late noon companies. It was customary to open these mercenary foreigners were altogether too tender of Rana's gunners was not much better. The fact was that The enemy shooting was distinctly bad ; that of the soon came the reply. Cannon balls ploughed the sand. Tant Gosaiks with their matchlocks, in nulla's and behind placed several hundred of the Kandharis, the mill As banking guards to his few precious guns, he had

turn were driven back by a charge of cavalry from the shooting whilst it lasted was deadly. But they in their leading his horde of bowmen most valiantly. Their final blow when volleyes of well-aimed arrows scattered had brought up his reserves and was about to deliver the day was going very badly for the Rana. Alarming fire.

triacably mixed the guns perforce were obliged to cease fire upon them. When friend and foe were thus interlocked only when the Muslim cavalry from the right bank came that found a clear field of fire. Relief from this guns though losing heavily from some of the make headway, though frequent charges on their side. They were beginning to frequent charges on their side. But the Rana and Durgadas came to their rescue by

Many of their horses were now riderless. The enemy provided too numerous and had a better supply of ammunition. The Rajputs were driven back towards the bank. Between the Rajputs and the Muslims must be driven into the river. As though the clansmen must be driven into the river. Cavalry on the left wing repeatedly charged. It seemed as though the Rajput horsemen had advanced to the summit of the hill. They were now in danger, they have discharges of arrows from the Rajput horse, they of the guns. Though they could fire but once to every discharge. The musketeers had advanced to the support of the Rajput horsemen, so opening a number of gaps for their between the guns, so opening a number of gaps for their and scattered their lives in unloading the iron chains the thick of the fight some of their men had dismounted had overruled some of the gun teams on the bank. In

The three Rajput chiefs were hotly engaged. They had alive. They began to shoot with accuracy over the space to their horses.

part of the Rajputs in the river bed and on the lower heads of the Rajputs in front of them. They did much damage to the enemy guns and afforded a breathing

Some hours after midday the three Rajput chieftains were despatched by the enemy galloping down upon them on the left bank. Numerous were the charges and counter-charges. The swivel-guns on the camels were brought into play, the riders discharging and reloading the wasps, without dismounting. They succeeded in their object of distracting the gunners of the artillery in position on the ridge. The Rana seized the opportunity in division and effected a crossing, though not without considerable loss. Meanwhile Arunagzeb's camel corps had driven off the Rana's camels.

The Rana's charge up to the guns was repelled, though iron chains were an unbroken obstacle. His men were driven back to the bed of the river. Fortunately his former kindness to their fellow-mercenaries on the opposite side of the river. Perhaps, too, they feared the vengeance of Arunagzeb should they fall into his hands.

him of his plan, to be put into operation if necessary, to bombard the Emperor by ostentatiously moving his cavalry towards the lake as if to attempt an attack on that side and then, apparently thinking better of it, as would be lulled into a false security. Bhim Singh guessed that a strong force would be watching the Debari Pass. He must, therefore, strike in between them and the lake until the Emperor's strong reserves were being brought into action elsewhere on the field. Posted on a tree-top for hours he watched the battle, restraining his natural impetuosity with great difficulty. It was not until the late afternoon that his chance came.

Mewar !

Of a verity the stars in their courses had fought for  
over one another in their headlong rout.  
became a howling mob, a disorganized horde falling  
between minutes the compact and conning army  
to prevent the panic. Their efforts were in vain. In  
mansabdars, dashing hither and thither, did their best  
The body-guard held together, and their basins and  
They threw down their cumbersome weapons and fled.  
it prudent to get a good start from Pursuing Rajputs.  
and being carried to the rear. The musketeers deemed  
against that the Emperor was in flight, or sorely wounded  
They had not seen exactly what happened. They im-  
The cavalry on the extreme flanks gave way first.  
disturbing of his peace.

angry and determined at last to make some rule the  
all day but his patience was exhausted. He was very  
seemed to have gone topsy-turvy. He had lain there  
small nullah a boar had dashed. The world above him  
in the world—a wild boar and its tusks. Out of that

race again the enemy that he dreaded more than all else  
now of a ship. The elephant would not be turned to  
their lances and were dashed aside like waves before the  
head again and again. The body-guard drove at it with  
legs. The mahout savagely dug his iron prong into its  
tibiae. It turned, with blood gushing from its two fore-  
feet its trunk and trumpeted madly with pain and  
scrupe; a small nullah barred its path. It was necessary  
to make a slight detour. Suddenly, inexplicably, it  
perated they would have been completely routed ere now.  
together in compact masses. Had they been less des-  
sabre and lance. It was marvellous how they still held  
off all their arrows and were contesting every inch with  
the Rajputs were driven back and back. They had shot  
it looked like a porcupine with bristling quills. Slowly  
turbled though it was studded so thick with arrows that  
time in his life had he sat on the elephant pad upper-  
, Khuda hai'. He was in his element. Not for the first  
his voice ringing on his men. Instantly he was shouting  
in reserve into the heart of the battle. They could hear  
and the thousands of unwaried horsemen hitherto held  
to rally to the attack again. Alarming now threw himself  
The Rana and his brave chieftains were thus enabled  
to detach a large body to hold him off at a safe distance.  
victory, yet he brought relief and compelled the enemy  
the Prince could not strike any decided blow to ensure  
crowing volleys from little-expected quarters. Though  
that when the advance party were driven off, they could  
not be driven far. Enemy cavalry were constantly re-  
He had so posted the matchlock men and the archers  
reserves. Bhim Singh had carefully planned his tactics.

columns to sweep down upon the enemy's rich provinces driven from Chitor, the Rana could detach strong flying hills had been destroyed. If the Emperor could be had been laid waste. What they could not carry to the satiastactory. They were short of supplies. The land In spite of this great victory, their position was not yet

out salutes from the palace ridge.

would add greater lustre to this thanksgiving by bombing cessation to render thanks to Eklinga. The captured guns mitted he would once more go in solemn state and pro-Rana proclaimed that as soon as his own wounds per- and the wounded had been carried back to Udaipur, the When all the necessary rites had been attended to

sprad a carpet of the slain.

the harvest of battle and on the field of honour had the side of their valiant lords who had so gallantly repaid proudly laid themselves down on the bed of death by join their husbands in , the manions of the sun, they Many widows mounted the funeral pyre. Larger to

to spring upon an over-confident foe.

that region, or had , beaten a strategic retreat, the better history would record that he had , recalled himself from valley and at the Sardi Pass. Of the Emperor himself his father could hardly blame him for his reverses in the Akbar. One comfort that unfortunate Prince now had ; Chitor, and on their way were joined by the astonished The broken urmies led eastwards to the shelter of impasse.

losses that day in men and in equipment were extricated only just in time to escape capture. His of his standing camp, from which his Queen had been desist and to content themselves with becoming masters man forbad a long pursuit. The clans were obliged to

Fortunate it was for Almighir that fatigue of horse and  
dismayed pieces in triumph to Udaipur.  
The captured elephants dragged twenty un-  
ordained. And had sent them to the rear, but he lost his heavy  
and baggage to save most of his horse-artillery during the action  
and brought them back in triumph. Almighir had man-  
aged to rounding Almighir's reserve of elephants, turned them  
with incredible spirit after the fleeing Mughals and, sur-  
by some miracle still unsent, led his Razotor clansmen  
struggle now that victory was theirs. But Durgadas,  
The Rana, sorely wounded, had retired from the  
be displayed in any ruler's armory.

No prouder troopers could hang on any castle wall or  
through to the imperial standards and captured them.  
With such irresistible vigor that they cut their way  
still compact body-guard and reserves they dashed  
among them was Lokham and his Saktawats. Into the  
spurred their jaded steeds to the pursuit. Foremost  
shouting the different war-cries of their clans, they  
stupor, however, did not endure many minutes.  
At this unexpected turn of events was beyond  
belief. They hardly dared trust their own eyes. Their  
valiant feudatories and allies who had thus far escaped  
the amazement of the Rana, and of all those of his

## THE FOR TAT

### CHAPTER XIV

the same coin, how splendid that would be! He received this news of the Emperor's departure with joy, and told his ambition to his companion-in-arms.

"Let us follow them up. When they think them selves out of danger, they will get careless, and perhaps we shall find an opportunity of raiding their camp and carrying off a useful hostage or two."

"I am with you, Prince, though I think you overbold. Still it will be a glorious adventure. We cannot take horses. We must also get hold of a couple of camel letters for the ladies if we capture them. 'Tis a big 'it'.

"Sixty daring spirits should suffice, and a few spare Yet, "tit for tat" is a good cure,

"Leave that to me, Prince. We have no camels with us. We must therefore depend on our luck in the Emperor's camp. If not, I am afraid there's no help for it; the poor ladies will have a rough time of it until we are beyond pursuit. Yet I dislike the idea of dragging these soft and delicate creatures along. Whilst we are surely be easier to get at him than to penetrate into his seraglio."

"We shall be as polite and considerate as circumstances permit. 'Twill be an undying theme for our bards. Sixty daring men were chosen. They were told what was afoot. They were prepared for anything provided

royal ladies. If only he could pay back the Musahal in beloved by Tahawwar Khan's attempt capture of the wondering how he could avenge the insult shown to his For some time past Ambika's champion had been young man.

Nassance duty and immediately reported it to the Delhi, detected this movement when out on recon- guard of Bhim Singh, who had been with the Prince in Jagat Singh, the commander of the Rana wat body- of his guards set out to Ajmer.

Informed, he left this perilous warfare and at the head Azam at Chitor, with instructions how to act until re- retrieve his prestige in the north. Leaving Akbar and whom he had summoned from Sultan Iliazam, would not await the arrival of his son Sultan Iliazam, Emperor became alarmed for his personal safety. The their plans succeeded beyond expectation. The the alert.

foraging parties at Chitor and kept him perpetually on command of a strong reconnaissance force harassed his peers' lines of communication, whilst Bhim Singh in to the northern part of the state to threaten the Em- last Sawaldas, the descendant of the illustrious Jamail, least. Accordinly it was decided to despatch the gal- hindered of all reinforcements from that direction at communications with his base at Ajmer. He must be of Ruttan Singh, Rawaat of Balumbar, to threaten his positions it was necessary, according to the wise counsel pose. He would naturally be anxious to retrieve his accidental defeat. To move him from his present strong armies in the field.

of Gujarat and Malwa and thereby re-provision his own

to the hills to find him.

The Prince still thanked after their original idea, but while consulte Sawaldas. A messenger was sent across he was quite willing to wait still longer, and in the mean-  
while chase.

and they would have something to show for their weary would frigthen Alamgir it accompsonshed notwithstanding close, Emperor seemed a hopeless game, but a night attack make a daring raid upon the camp. Capturing the Prince that after all they might join him, and together Japat Singh thought of Sawaldas. He suggested to the were on a fool's errand and had better give it up, when campment. They were beginning to think that they lay in some concealed post of observation and considered ways and means of entering the strongly guarded en-  
Nigah after night Bhit Singh and his escort leader

from Aymer.

The was right glad to welcome the troops the Emperor. He was effective, for Sawaldas' activities had alarmed offensive defence, so that he might not have to wait for the men went ahead with the Pash-khana or advance camp, which was protected by two thousand of the body-guard. The camping grounds were always carefully selected for men who were camp-followers and the bazaar-  
walla stratagems into his luxurios tent with his Queen and pitched out of his elaborate camp every evening, but could stage ahead, so that he might not have to wait for the who kept up the camp bazaars.

The Emperor had Sawaldas reasoning that the trains and capturing quite a number of the camp-followers tented himself with pillars some of the supply trains Relying on similar opportunities might have occurred, rivers, and much power. Now Aurangzeb's route lay across several

to give him a lesson not to allow Nur Jalaal to have so who had crossed over in advance. Malahabat Khan wished and was separated from the main body of his escort, as he lay in camp beside a river on his way to Kabul of Shah Jahan, had once seized the Emperor Jahangir exploit of Malahabat Khan. That general, the partisan down upon the Emperor and attempted to repeat the many miles away from Jalandar, would have swooped Sawaias, who was posted in the hills to the west not Had it not been for this reinforcement the gallant

peror on the last stages of his journey.

mandant at Ajmer had sent forward to escort the Emperor to meet them were five thousand men whom the company more leisurely as in peace-time excursions. Advancing Bhilwara on the Kotari river did the Juirghals proceed until they had passed through the deserted village of their long journey of a hundred and ten miles. Not household troops, moved rapidly for the first half of The imperial camp, guarded by five thousand picked recalled.

passed into safer country and the cavalry had been and make the most of a warning moon until they had enterprise. It was therefore necessary to travel by night to what promised, successful or not, to be a daring parting Emperor. That would have been a sad ending screen across the country to protect the rear of the detachment sent out by Sultan Azam to act as a by the cavalry sent out by Sultan Azam to act as an Emperor's camp. His little band were nearly caught Chitor, the Prince set out in prudent pursuit of the had been detained to watch and worry the Juirghals at leaving Kisahan Singh in charge of the troops that

them were devoted to the mainly youth.

little chamber latrined and covered with a silken net in a splendid gilded and painted *mughalaur*, a sort of solemn measured way. On the back of the first elephant, riding out in a rich musical sound as they moved in their costly trappings, the massive bells of silver upon them clear the road of all intruders, came ten statly elephants a number of men on foot, armed with long lances to fire a salute as the Emperor entered. Preceded by a already drawn up on both sides of the royal gate were advance. The few horse-guns that had been saved were watchers saw late in the evening the royal procession.

Into the camp symmetrically laid-out encampment the three of the camp purveyors or bazaars. side of these roads were pitched the tents and booths marked by lofty poles similarly decorated. On either angles across the central track ran smaller roads standards and white chorwies. At intervals at right side to side lofty bamboo poles were erected bearing red along the broad track running through the camp from camp.

commanders, to bear the brunt of any attack upon the had their tents behind the quarters of their respective other officers of the household. The common troopers tents by the side of the royal enclosure for the Emperor's horses, elephants and camels, and for the gunners and their tents, leaving room, however, for a line of special between them the mansabdars and inferior amirs had running across the open space in front of the baghara. amirs at stated intervals on either side of a broad track busy marking out similar but smaller enclosures for the To the right and left of this midmost square men were with their trumpets and cymbals, and the Chanki Khana or guard tent.

Behind this big tent two smaller enclosures with more elaborate screens of flowered chintz or figured satin and decorated with silk-en fringes were made within the royal square. In one the private tents of the monarch were pitched; in the other behind his the tents of his Begum and her women. These tents were very numerous, but the experienced pioneers had them up in a short time, and, placing within them thick cotton mats, covered these with splendid carpets and square brocade cushions for royal feet to tread on and royal backs to lean against. In front of the square a large open space was left, in this, some little distance from the royal gate, were set up two large tents, the Nakkar Khana for the musicians.

The following evening young men in close consultation in a spot overlooking the next campfire marked out the spacious square within which the royal tent was to be pitched after the ground had been cleared and leveled by the pioneers. Every ten paces two poles had been fixed side by side; between these were put the loty screens, composed of strong red cloth lined with printed calico stretched on light wooden frames. In an immeasurably short space of time the screens were made from ropes attached to pegs and the whole square was enclosed. The laden elephants and camels passed within to deposit their loads. Within and facing the entrance of this enclosure a lofty tent arose, upheld by two huge poles and covered with red cloth. These poles were in three pieces and formed the load of one elephant, usually there was at least three such tents, but the directed by the pioneers. This was the audience tent, who had been trained to lift them about in his truck as were in three pieces and formed the load of one elephant, usually there was at least three such tents, but the directed by the pioneers. This was the audience tent, who had been trained to lift them about in his truck as

Bhim Singh and his three companions behind the  
sacks of grain and bundles of hay in their boat had  
held a long debate as to the best hours for this daring  
attempt to get into the Emperor's tent. Obviously, it  
caught wandering aimlessly about.

Round each amir's quarters the watchmen were calling  
out as they went, 'Khadar!', 'have a care!'. The kotwal  
blowing a trumpet. In spite of all precautions robbers were  
the bazaars crying out 'Khadar!', and every little while  
or provost-marshall had sent his soldiers to patrol  
out as they went, 'Khadar!', 'have a care!'. The kotwal  
Round each amir's quarters the watchmen were calling  
out as they went, 'Khadar!', 'have a care!'. The kotwal  
what was on foot the pioneers would have cut it down.  
its branches overhanging the screens. Had they known  
large banyan tree stood just outside the royal enclosure,  
symmetry of the camp but aided the conspirators. One  
most of the tents had been pitched spilted the usual  
It was a dark night. The scattered trees under which  
be now or never. They could not afford to take risks.  
questions. It was clear to them, however, that it must  
came their way, else they might have been asked awkward  
to their Delhi experience. Luckily no Punjabi trooper  
They managed the camp dialect passably enough, thanks  
the royal enclosure. Horse food was their stock-in-trade.  
in the long bazaar street not far from the right side of  
Accordingly, the following night found them installed  
Bhag will do the business to-morrow night.',

'A splendid idea,' exclaimed Jagat Singh excitedly.  
, Dresses us up in the Punjabi garb and give us their passes  
and their goods and we'll do it. We ought to know how  
to play the part, for we longed about the Delhi bazaars  
long enough. Prince, yourself, myself, Jaswant, and  
They managed the camp dialect passably enough, thanks  
the royal enclosure. Horse food was their stock-in-trade.  
in the long bazaar street not far from the right side of  
Accordingly, the following night found them installed  
Bhag will do the business to-morrow night.',

your wits to work and try your luck? You must then set a shop yourself at the next camp? You can't then set up there. Why not get in amongst the bazaar folk and open some of these bazaar purveyors, Pujababis, I think they you can only do so in disarray. Now, I have captured wish to get into that camp to execute your fantastic idea , Well, Prince, it has just occurred to me that if you war. Advise us, Sawaldas, have you thought of a plan? "Am at Delhi. We must remind him that he is still at insides of his tents are nearly as gorgeous as the Divan-remarked Bhim Singh to his companions. "I warrant the , This monarch makes war in a comfortable manner,"

with brocade having deep fringes of silk and gold. Four behind. The four poles of the litter were covered and glass windows borne by eight men, four in front and in a takhti-ratna, a superb litter with painted pillars lowed at a short interval by the Emperor himself seated movement of the beasts beneath them. They were following to and fro like a hammock, whereas the nighthorses suspended between two smaller elephants. This was a more comfortable way of travelling, for the litter gently swinging to and fro like a hammock, whereas the nighthorses of her court. The last of these ladies was riding ladies proportionate to their rank, the eight principal Behind her came, in due order, with equipage and retinue

splendidly mounted, each carrying his wand of office. padhores. Her chief eunuchs were close to them, sides of her were her women-servants riding handsome ladies of her court. This arduous camping. On both occasions he accompanied him on this arduous camping. The favourette and Circassian wife of Udeperi, the

In that space not a soul was moving. Some tents in both enclosures had lamps still burning. He had hoped all would be in darkness. Cravelling rapidly through the cloth of a screen which he had cut open with his knife, he continued on hands and knees picking his way between some smaller tents towards the central one in the first enclosure. He had to be particularly careful not to jerk the tent ropes.

He lay still for a moment to take his bearings. The dim outline of the old tree was a sure mark. The central tent was a fairly large two-pole double-fly tent with an outer passage running all round it. He lay and listened. In the passage he could hear some one breathing. Carefully he crawled all round three sides; he dared not go across the front for two men were on guard outside the entrance.

He decided to try his chance from the rear. Loosening a couple of cords that held down the fly, he pushed his head and shoulders, with the sack across them, inside. Fortunately it was one of the largest sacks they could find. Drowsy body-servants were sitting dozing in the passage. From the breathings he gathered that there were two of them at the corners. He drew his legs inside and, still covered with the sack, pulled himself along till his head touched the inner wall of the tent. Carefully, very cautiously, he cut a small peep-hole and looked within.

There was his victim lying propped up on a gilt couch and looking out. "It's hopeless," thought the other side of his head. "I shall never be able to do it; who would have thought that the old man would be so ploughing the Prince," I said to myself. "This is the time of night?" Had he been quiet? "I shall never be able to do it; who would have thought that the old man would be so ploughing the Prince," I said to myself. "This is the time of night?"

against the sky.

out from the dark outlines of the lofty audience tent the first of the two inner enclosures as he could make other side. He found himself just at the rear corner of hour before, as lightly as a cat, he jumped down on the his sack, sprang into the branches and waited a weary into that space he emptied the bundles of hay from

slip between these trunks in the dark.

Silently after passing one of the sentries unchallenged to between them. It was no very difficult matter for him by several smaller ones having convenient hiding space

It was a fine old tree, with its main trunk surrounded

side of the royal square where the banyan tree stood have been observed slowly making his way down that a heavy sack so that his face could not be seen, might tents had all been extinguished, a huge, bent beneath

When the torches that guided the few amirs to their

Prince.

silence in build. He would be no burden for the athlete tied his feet together. The Emperor was old and very having gagged him from behind with his turban and the sack and use it to throw over the monarch after that side of the enclosure. If possible, he could empty to deliver it to one of the royal guards in the tents on still astir, the Prince should walk to the banyan tree with a sack of provender on his back, as if he were going accordingly it was decided that, whilst the camp was

causal wanderers.

for the night, the guards would be very suspicious of the tent of audience to make their obediencies to the Emperor. Yet when all had more or less settled down respective quarters from their customary attendance at must be some time after the amirs had returned to their

It was enough. He reached his tree, swung up into the branches again, listened to discover if the coast was clear, for he did not wish to drop on to the sentry, heard him go by and stop to give heed to the commotion within the enclosure, where tortoises were being carried about by servants for the bold intruder, dropped ever so lightly out to the ground and made his way, dodging along in the shadows, back to his three anxious companions. Breathlessly he told them it was no use. They must slip out of camp early next morning and return to Chitor.

caught the walker's foot. He stopped to pick it up, cursing under his breath the untidy ways of his companion, who was always leaving his clothes lying about. Bhim Singh had just found the opening and was wriggling through it when, unfortun- nately, the servant's hand touched his foot. Instantly he fellow the one word, "robbers". The other man bolted round to the front and warned the two guards, who proceeded rapidly to the rear, one on each side of the Bhim. Meanwhile the servant whose hand had touched him jerked him over the ropes. He then rose and stooping had not gone many paces before he bumped into one of the guards with such violence that he took the wind out of his way out in pursuit. The Prince, who had not yet quenched his anger at being dropped to his knees and tried to wriggle himself over the sack, threw it over his enemy's head and hauled him up by the hair. He proceeded to run along in the direction of the tree. He had not gone many paces before he bumped into one of the guards who had not yet recovered from his fall. The Prince had not yet recovered from his fall. The Prince had not yet recovered from his fall.

The Emperor began reciting the verses in a low tone.  
The dozen sermons I used themselves. One rose to his feet and stretched his arms with a suppressed yawn, and began carefully to rope his way along to sit down by his companion. Bhim Singh heard the movement and started to beat a retreat, crawling backwards to the loosened fly of the tent. By some mischance his feet missed the place. The man was almost upon him; he leaped his body round so as to lie parallel to the outer tent wall. He was not quick enough. The sack had slipped off his shoulders and, as ill fate would have it,

THE END

in his treacherous designs, whereas a slight indiscretion  
mentis and had shown how Goculdas had limited himself  
that had brought him in, had corroborated his state-  
conduct. Tahawwar Khan, who commanded the escort  
truth, without any attempt to excuse or palliate his base  
himself on the Rana's mercy and told him the exact  
the traitor Goculdas to the Rana. Goculdas had thrown  
had kept his word and, under a flag of truce, had sent  
during his absence chasing the Emperor, Sultan Akbar  
However, he had the consolation of learning that  
so urgent.

the necessity of reprovising the Rana's armies was  
would be no time for love-making and dallying whilst  
good luck to come across them on their journey. There  
a rapid raid upon Gujarat could hardly hope to have the  
infat son at Mount Abu, Prince Bhim in command of  
decided after the rains to pay a fleeting visit to her  
visit to them. Even if, as was likely enough, the Rani  
presence. He had no excuse, nor any occasion for a  
time being was free from the invader's unwelcome  
loved Prince had returned to Jodhpur, which for the  
patience. He learnt that Rani Kormadevi and his be-  
Meanwhile Prince Bhim had to possess his soul in  
activity, was to head another flying column into Malwa.  
Bhim Singh was to lead an expedition into Gujarat, and  
the Civil Minister, Dayal Sah, a man of high courage and  
and Malwa. As soon as the rains were over Prince  
was planning raids upon the enemy provinces of Gujarat  
was unbroken and his brain was as active as ever. He  
rapidly as it was hoped. However, the Rana's spirit  
still suffering from his wounds, which had not healed so  
Bhim Singh returned to Udaipur and found his father

them back to Ajimer.

Zalandal and defeated them with great loss, driving to the foe. He met them in the open field at Purabandhan his guerrilla tactics and to give pitched battle reinforced, for Sivardas now felt himself ready to pitched battle, they lost thereby all chance of being reinforced, these Princes were foolishly inactive. Hearing another by a new army under Sultan Alauzam from the Deccan, meant by Akbar and Azam, who were soon to be joined unusual activity so as to prevent any northward move supplies to his sons. Bhim Singh was warned to display an appeal was despatching twelve thousand men and ample force which was justified. Word reached him that Arunashah had must perforce come to a stop. The Rana's open field was about to begin, when all operations in the season was about to begin, when all operations in the rainstorms sent down from Ajimer. The rainy reinforcements sent down from Ajimer. The gallant leader might intercept supplies and that the gallant leader might intercept supplies and Sivardas from the garrisons on the Aravallis, in order Rana instructed the Thakur of Chittor to reinforce Bhim Singh about their adventure. Shortly afterwards the hourling camp near Chitor. They had determined to say their camp and the complications made their way back to whilst all were busy preparing for the day's march, Bhim Singh and his companions made their way back to start out of the Jumna camp early next morning

## THE OUTLAY

### CHAPTER X

They had passed through several hills or settlements as they rode along the thickly wooded valleys and over the rocky hills. Each settlement covered a large area and was divided into hamlets, groups of huts built of interwoven bamboos or loose stones. Each hut was built of a hill, contained also several huts for cattle and for grain, all within a single enclosure. Inter-tribal feuds and robberies were frequent. Consequently Prince gathered contingents of bowmen. News of his expedition had preceded him, and the wild mountainers who lived by robbery were easily attracted by the prospects of a goodly share in the rich plunder. But this Prince each settlement as he passed through it the news of a family had to be well prepared to stand a siege.

By the Rana before setting forth across the hilly tracts to the south under their eager Prince. They were all well mounted and in splendid condition for their trying campaign. The Rana, as he rode down the lines, was well pleased with them, and wished them good fortune. Their route lay across sixty miles of wild forest country sparsely inhabited by the savage Bhils and lawless tribes of mixed descent. The Rana had no jurisdiction here, and the tribes lived by robbery and plunder or by the proceeds of rakhaval or blackmail paid by the villages who desired to escape their lawless depredations. But with the Rana. Still, it was not safe travelling for small detached parties. Stragglers were usually plundered. Consequently Bhim Singh kept his forces well together. Their numbers commanded respect. Thus they made their way to Kotra, intending thence to follow the streams that flowed southward into the river Sabarmati.

and men mustered on the 'field of war' to be reviewed  
At last one bright crisp morning in Pushya five thou-  
target. And so the months passed.  
at laying a gun, he aimed so correctly as to shatter the  
Great was his joy one day when, invited to try his skill  
effect. All this Bhim Singh unobtrusively studied,  
the correct angles before their cannon balls could take  
like so that the gunners had to adjust their pieces to  
floatating targets fitted with sails were set adrift on the  
artillery practices carried out by the Frank gunners.  
learnt how to use a matchlock and was present at the  
friends his skillful way of throwing the javelin. He  
seizes in all kinds of martial exercises. He taught his  
companions trained their horses and practised them-  
During the breaks in the rains, the Prince and his

spending upon the horse and was gone.  
clement Rana and the assembled nobles, could as  
man's hand would be against him. Saluting the  
him. After this, it would in Rajput territory, every  
loyal men. Twenty-four hours, France was granted to  
told to remove himself without delay from the sight of  
horse with black trappings was led forward, and he was  
a black scabbard were handed to him; a coal-black  
pronounced. A black shield and lance and a sword in  
entirely in black from turban to shoes. Sentence was  
gone through. The culprit was brought forward dressed  
front of the place, the ceremonial of outlawry had been  
cordially, on a set day, before the assembled durbar in  
had decided on outlawry as a fitting punishment. Ac-  
After due consultation with his chieftains, the Rana  
completely as it had been.

and have saved Akbar's army from being entrapped so  
on his part might easily have betrayed the Rajput plans

cooked some rice in milk and poured it into a small hole decessed. The Jogi, pleased with the handsome gift, with a fine milk-cow, requested him to give food to the heir to step forward and, presenting the Jogi their names of the deceased's ancestors and called upon the went its sudden flight heavenwards, he rehearsed the small piece of rope round the neck of the horse to prevent it from biting his master. Then before these covered by red cloth and white respectively. Lying a he placed two empty jars, the mouths of which were an arrow and a small copper coin. Then before these up to paradise. In front of the brazen horse he stuck spirit of the dead man was supposed to enter and travel image of a horse with a small hole in it into which the ceased's bier. On the top of the four he put the brass and maize flour, which he deposited in front of the dead maize. He was provided with many sheaves of wheat the scene. In the evening the Bhil Jogi made his appearance on

In the evening the Bhil Jogi lasted until late in the afternoon. These ceremonies lasted until late in the afternoon. either of these weapons, or by demanding milk, gave and suggest it the man had happened to die a natural death. man whose spirit was possessing him had been killed by it only by calling for sword or lance, if the particular into him, went through the same performance, varying were called up by the Bhupa, who, as each spirit entered slayer. After this, the spirits of the deceased's ancestors air. The dead man's spirit evidently wished to slay his the war-cry, and with each shout fired an arrow into the strong bamboo matting; he jumped about and shouted The witch-finder seized the bow and the quiver made of him. He called for a bow and arrows, for the headman had been slain by an arrow shot by some unknown foe. excited. The spirit of the dead man had entered into

On a wooden platform was seated the Bhopas or witch-doctors of the village. Near him was a big earthen pot with a brass dish over its mouth. The Bill drummers were beating upon this dish, at the same time singing in unison.

The delay could not be helped, and the Prince and his men were obliged to wait. They grouped themselves on the hill slopes and watched with much interest the ceremony. That day was to be spent in performing the ceremony far and near had assembled to do him honour. Headman had met his death. All the dead man's friends of Bhim Singh's arrival was the twelfth day after the funeral feast. Now it so happened that the morning before they left the hill tracts the Rajputs were delayed for several days. The headman who was to have laged for several days. In the last of the pails that they had passed through

comb, flowing out behind him. Black hair, usually plaited and fastened with a wooden and dance by himself within the circle, with his long and every now and then one would leave his companions and cement grew the dancers leaped about more wildly, those behind, keeping time with the drum. As the each man struck alternately against those in front and around them with sticks in their hands. These sticks the drummers in the centre the men revolved in a circle or customary war-dance before an expedition. Until each contingent of warriors had danced the ghatana progress was somewhat delayed by his having to wait

again to sleep, whilst the Prince and his companions  
When he had thus spoken, Goondas laid himself down  
plenty of practice in self-defence, I know.

it follows not that he is a coward or a caitiff. He gets  
a formidable adversary. A man may be an outlaw, but  
whose senses were rapidly weakening, you will find me  
, Speak not too rashly, fair sir, replied the other,  
doom,

miserable caitiff, and then be prepared to meet him  
the Prince. Well, well, sleep off the tumes of thy portion,  
the annoying delay in our urgent business, remarked  
, So this thou we must thank for thy funeral feast and  
down snatched hours-timers,

in true Rajput style is more to my taste than shooting  
hesitate to risk it in a stern fight. A duel to the death  
back, but I am not so in love with my life that I should  
thick-headed Bhil robber whom I shot some twelve days  
Perchance I shall not find you so easy a prey as that  
this opiate and then shall I be ready to settle the score.  
your courtesy leave me for two hours more to sleep off  
tricked me down, though I know not how; but now of  
He answered slowly, Well, Prince Bhim, so you have  
And then a light dawned upon his opium-dabbled brain.

the bold Mahratta ? ,  
, Can he, like me, be going to cast in his fortunes with  
these wild parts? he muttered in growly bewilderment.  
, Bhim Singh, Bhim Singh? What brings him to  
spendings to him.  
At the sound of this voice Goondas slowly rose to his  
feet and stood swaying unsteadily. He tried to pull  
himself together and to realise who it was that was  
brother to the Princess Ambalka, have a score to settle  
with thee !

“Rise, Goculdas, I, Bhim Singh, bracelet-bound  
wrestch alone?”,  
growled in a thick voice. “Canst not leave an unhappy  
“What means this unmannerly disturbance?”, he  
who shorty sat up, rubbing his eyes.  
Dismounting, the Prince roughly shook the sleeper,  
slope, a black horse was quietly cropping the grass.  
Goculdas. Near by, under a clump of trees on the hill  
weapons that this was none other than the outlaw  
In a moment he recoupled from his black garments and  
it to be a man lying asleep full length upon the sward.  
Singh roughly him towards the object and discovered  
of a glen. Pattering Thunderbolt's glossy neck, Bhim  
lying under a big tree in an open clearing at the bottom  
his good horse Thunderbolt shied at a black object  
Even as thoughts were passing through his mind  
wait overlong for these men to recover their wits.

heard the drunken songs in the distance, but I cannot  
, another delay, gloomily reflected the Prince, as he  
supplied by the heir was making the revelers very drunk.  
the feasting was now at its height and the crude liquor  
were returning to their bivouac near the Bhilpal, where  
twin stream that promised to be their surest guide, they  
that covered the steep slopes. Having chosen the mouth  
their best route down the ghat through the thick jungle  
of the chieftains to a commanding peak to trace out  
feasting the villagers, whilst the dead man's relatives were  
The next morning, whilst the dead man's relatives were  
present from family friends.

him by the heir, who in his turn also received many  
hole again with a small coin. After this he filled up the  
it together with a small coin. After this he filled up the  
he had dug in the ground. A potful of liquor followed

bolt, who galloped on hitherless.

a bough with all his might, he swinging clear of Thunderbolt simultaneously reached up his left arm. Grasping pressed his knees hard upon the upper sides of his saddle, dropped his lance, slipped his feet out of the stirrups, the tree. Realising that his aim was lost, the Prince Thunderbolt stumbled against a projecting root of bolt too near it. Just as they were about to encounter, adversary, but most unfortunately he took Thunderbolt this time he reached the tree a trifle sooner than his setting his jaw hard, he prepared for the third career. This time he must end the fight soon or his wound might prove that he must end the fight soon or his wound might prove right arm. The blood began to flow. The Prince knew tore an ugly gap in Bhim Singh's coat of mail under his his shield in time; Goculdas spear glanced off it and the deadly steel head. The Prince had not brought up shield, which, though much dimmed by the blow, held off Goculdas caught the Prince's lance-point square on his This time the Prince had the worst of the encounter, more they ran at each other.

When these preliminaries had been duly settled, each galloped towards each other and met with a tremendous shock. Each man's lance was splintered to pieces on the other's shield. New lances were procured and once rode to his end of the glen. Turning their horses, they galloped towards each other and met with a tremendous shock. But they might obstruct the upward swing of a sword. Therefore it was agreed that the sword should be used of a horseman passing under them without impediment. However, the boughs were high enough to permit centre. However, the boughs were high enough to permit large-tree that stood rather near the fairway towards some eighty yards. The only obstacle was the large

only on foot.

glen with its open grassy bottom gave them a run of ground was favourable for such a contest. The to either of them.

other should be killed. The idea of flight never occurred thought out on foot with sword and dagger until one or a lance-trust or any miscachance, the duel was to be the flight on foot. Again, it either were dismounted and continue thronw, then they should both dismount and being all the lances were splintered without either being lances of the Prince's companions were to be used. If a flight to the bitter end. If a lance were broken, the terms of the combat. They agreed that it was to be

The Prince called slowly up to him in order to settle

Simeon's adventurous career.

was indeed to prove the sternest of all the flights in him than a wife there was a perfect understanding. The flight he. Between him and the steed he loved more tenderly flight. None could be more at home in the saddle than had the advantage of experience in many a hard-won muscular arm. Considerably older than the Prince, he tall and powerfully built, he had a long reach with his In truth he was, as he had said, a formidable adversary.

that he was ready.

into the saddle and haled across the glen to announce and his black shield upon his left arm he sprang lightly of mail and his sword. With his lance in his right hand the outlaw with calm deliberateness buckled on his coat trotting to his master to be saddled and bridled. Then whistled to his steed, who neighted in reply and came stretched his arms and drew a few deep breaths. He At the appointed time Gondidas arose, shook himself, services upon the grass.

drew off to the hillside, dismounted and stretched them-

vigour.

This expedition into Gujarat with resolution, rapidity and coolness restored him sufficiently to enable him to carry out loss of blood, but a rest of several days and nourishing neigbhouring stream and bound up. He was faint with him. Bhim Singh's wounds were bathed in a outlaws. For that reason, too, they buried his armour horse they turned adrift. It was unlucky to despoil an Over the dead man they raised a cairn of stones. His favour.

The wheel of fortune had revolved in Bhim Singh's life, hardly realised that all was over and that the Prince coming to the aid of the wounded and rapidly from had the greatest difficulty in restraining themselves had done so suddenly that the chieftains, who

heart.

Goculdas, endevouring to shorten his swing, stumbled by a sharp-pointed dagger through Goculdas's mail into his hand backwards onto the grass. The Prince had drawn his sword with diminished force. The next instant against the kneeing figure, upon whose back he brought his sword with a sharp turn of his left wrist jerked his narrow-bladed

but he must trust to his good stars to get his head out chain-mail and his back also was well enough protected, shoulderers were guarded by a double thickness of steel blow near the hit and so mitigate its severity. His He trusted that he would thus catch the force of the he did so, on one knee and jerking his head to one side. The downward rush of his enemy's sword, dropping, as It was now or never. He ran in boldly right under

with his unencumbered left hand he drew his dagger. Back and, throwing the now useless shield from him, cleaving sword. Too shaken to use his sword, he sprang much damaged; his left arm felt the sharp cut of the his adversary. One mighty blow split his shield, already black he leaped to escape the savage swinging sword of wound in his side was sapping his strength. Back and was all Bhim Singh could do to parry his blows. The he ran, he engaged the Prince in a furious onslaught. It false, had jumped off his horse. Drawing his sword as and turned to face his enemy, who, disdaining to play Droppling to the ground, Bhim Singh drew his sword

swing for a moment on the bout. Outlaw's spear passed harmlessly between his legs as he manoeuvre on Bhim Singh's part saved his life, for the Goculdas thrust hard at the Prince, but this unusual

All this had been done with the speed of thought.

retumed to Udaipur his brother Jai Singh and Dayal from victory to victory. About the time that Bhim Singh that his spoils were already considerable, the numerous inhabitants of Gujarat, who had given a willing ear to the complaints of the people, had given a full career to Surat, the richest town in Bhim Singh in full career to Surat, the richest town in the whole province. The Prince had had recalled brilliant successes. He had captured Idar and proceeded by Birnagar suddenly appeared before Patan, the residence of the provincial satrap, which he plundered. Several other towns had shared the same fate. His annoyances at being recalled in the blood-tide of success may be imagined, but he dared not disobey his father, tended to send him and his lieutenant Lala warrior Khan Chitor, had marched to Ajmer, whence his father in-Chitor, leaving his brother Azam at Deccan, Akbar, leaving his brother Azam at

On the arrival of Sultan Muazzam with a strong army from the Deccan, Akbar, leaving his brother Azam at the knew the Rana would be planning.

and moreover he did not wish to miss the campaign that down into Marwar territory on the western side of the formidable Aravallis. Akbar had no desire to attempt a direct passage to the sandy plains of Marwar across the mountains. One experience had been enough for him. The Rana had allowed him to leave Chitor

Muslims in check, if need arose, until he could join them and the stout-hearted Rana might be trusted to hold the carry the campaign into Marwar. The gallant Durgadas of freeing Marwar once and for all. After that his design without opposition. It would make easier his design for him. The Rana had allowed him to leave Chitor

for the final phase of the campaign.

Rana had given a willing ear to the complaints of the inhabitants of Gujarat, who had sent a deputation to complain of their woes. Consequently he had recalled that his spoils were already considerable, the numerous perhaps on this account, and partly because he knew that his spoils were already considerable, the numerous inhabitants of Gujarat, who had given a full career to Surat, the richest town in Bhim Singh in full career to Surat, the richest town in the whole province. The Prince had had recalled brilliant successes. He had captured Idar and proceeded by Birnagar suddenly appeared before Patan, the residence of the provincial satrap, which he plundered. Several other towns had shared the same fate. His annoyances at being recalled in the blood-tide of success may be imagined, but he dared not disobey his father, tended to send him and his lieutenant Lala warrior Khan Chitor, had marched to Ajmer, whence his father in-Chitor, leaving his brother Azam at Deccan, Akbar, leaving his brother Azam at

It was towards the end of the month of December in the following year that the Rana launched his last offensive against the Alwaghals still on the soil of Alwar. Dayal Sahi, the Civil Minister, had returned from his expedition to Malwa full of spoils. The provisions, the money into Malwa and the cattle that he had brought back with him were an exceedingly welcome addition to the Rana's war-chest. Anungarabhad, who was chiefly vulnerable supplies, had set them a bad example in through his resources, had set them a bad example in ruthlessness pillaging. Circumstances forced the Rajputs to abandon, in this one instance, their traditional leniency to the vanquished. Dayal Sah had been reduced to the vanquished. The minister knew that whatever he did must be done quickly. He hoped by examples of resistance. The minister knew that stout but unavailing been put to the sword for their stout but unavailing leniency in his plundering. Numerous garnisons had surrendered at Dayal Sah. But the soldiers holding Malwa surrended at discretion. The emperor never relaxed in their loyalty. This had annoyed Dayal Sah. The resorted to measures against their religion, though it went contrary to the Rajput spirit. The Nazis were bound and shaved and the Germans were thrown into wells.

## EXONIJL V NOJ DIB V

CHAPTER XI

spiritless such fierce unruly passion in any man's heart. Ah, my daughter, may it never happen that thou in the Lakkur, to make even a Rajput forget his allegiance. The god of love wields a tyrannic power', remarked

madness of love to tread such an evil path.

fellow in many respects, had been led astray by the and yet they were sorry that Goudas, an excommunicate Goudas. They were glad to hear of the traitor's death, adventure. He then told them of his meeting with had failed, and so had hitherto kept silent about that have been assured of peace and goodwill. However, he to step into his father's shoes, and then Rajastran would any rate it would have given his friend Akbar a chance success in that exploit would have ended the war. At Doubtless, whether his father liked it or not, tation, he asked them, could a youth resist such a temptation, he of escapade; he half felt that it savoured more of a Pathan horse-thief's action than of a soldier's, but could assess that he had attempted it out of a youthful news of such a backstairs plot. The Prince himself he did not know whether his father would relish the conqueror himself. Bhim Singh bound them to secrecy; had been to kidnapping the mighty Alamgir, the world were intensely interested to hear how near the Prince recital of his adventures since they had parted. They hastened with rapt attention to the Prince's modest On the evening of his arrival Premabai and her father

closed themselves from the evil habit.

practicie, and had by his example warned many of his drun. The Prince had set this face againts this obnoxious had never been dimmed by the use of opium or other Jhule brightness of his eye, the grace of his movements, into full unhood. This tall little figure had filled out,

had given him a more thoughtful look. He had grown  
Bhim in the cavalcade. The stern experience of war  
chivalry. Her heart beat wildly as she noted Prince  
had watched the incoming of the gaté Premabai  
fortress. From the battlements near the gate Premabai  
day when he marched out to escort his suzerain to his  
headquarters. A proud man had the Thakur been that  
over the town of Ghanerao, which the Rana made his  
In a few weeks the red banner of Mevar was floating

his project in Godwar.  
armies. So now the Rana felt himself free to open  
their heavy ; it would take them some time to re-form  
prevent them again entering Mevar. The Mughals had  
by a strong force under his heir, Jai Singh, who was to  
There the Rana was content to leave them, contented

Banas and the Chambal.  
far away to the north-east near the confluence of the  
reached the tremendous strongly strong fortress of Ranathambor  
free with the rest. Nor did they bat until they had  
stem the tide of fugitives and had forced to turn and  
danger in so doing, but all to no avail. They could not  
their men. They exposed themselves most fearlessly to  
Muzzaam and his brother made valiant efforts to rally  
communicated its panic to the army from the Deccan.  
come too late. Azam's army was in full flight and  
spite of the assistance brought by Muzzaam. This had  
the clans. The Mughals were swept from the field in  
furious, but nothing could resist the dauntless valour of  
meet the advancing Rajputs. The battle was long and  
himself, in full confidence of victory, moved down to  
hill and fortress of the ancient Sesodia capital whilst he  
allowed his brother Muzzaam to occupy the formidable  
Sah had fallen upon Azam near Chitor. That Prince had

The Prince laughed gallily as he said this, but Premabai's face wore a sad expression. There was no hope for her. She must finally renounce the daydreams that would further the happiness of all her resolutions, and do her best to visit her in spite of all her efforts. It will not be long before you generous-hearted girl! It will be long before you are called upon to fulfil this self-sacrificing resolve!

"Indeed I came near to losing it more than once until I hit upon the precaution of binding a silken clot of tightly over it on my wrist. I see I must creep once more into the Emperor's camp; this time to steal not an Emperor from your fingers."

bracelet-bound brother. But what need had she of such a token of your undying fidelity? Your rescue out of her was a better answer than any customary gift of a bracelet, Prince. And she must renew your bracelet, her another, Prince. And she must send it in.

The next day news came to the Rana that Akbar and Tabaawwar Khan were marching to expel him from the territories on the western side of the Aravallis. He sent an urgent message to the Rani of Jodhpur to repair once more to the safety of Kumbhalmer before her retreat was cut off. He pointed out to her that though they hoped for victory it was by no means certain, because the Musahims would find the flatter country of Marwar easier to move over with their heavy guns. Unlike the broken hill country of Mewar, it was a country indeed more like the great plains to which their armies were accustomed.

Is like to come of it.

Poor Premabai secretly longed that the Prince had given her his devotion, but not to the length of casting all other bonds of duty and allegiance to the winds. It was not to be, and so her only answer to her father was a sigh. The Prince's mind during this conversation was filled with thoughts of Ambalka. He would ask Premabai about her at the first opportunity, never suspecting what a trial such questions would be to the Thakur's daughter. Her father at this juncture being called apart to the outer balcony to inspect the fortress guard for that night drawn up below, Bhim Singh turned and said, "Fair Premabai, what news have you to give me of Rani Kormadevi and her ward?"

"Do you really want to know about the Rani, Prince, or only of the beautiful Princess of Amba?" replied Premabai with a brave smile. "Will it interest you to learn how the Rani has brought over to her side some of her assassins who were inclined to waver in their allegiance owing to Mughal falsehoods about the death of their Nay, nay, your heart longs not for such tidings."

"You have guessed aright, fair maidens," answered Bhim Singh, "such tidings I shall learn in the council hall. But tell me—the Princess, is she even now at Jodhpur with the Rani? How does she fare?"

No doubt, father thee, but see what misery is given her this devotion, but not to the length of casting all the katchhi You sent here, that beautiful body of gold before she left Kumbarmer she was proudly wearing , She is well and happy. The last time I saw her

into the informal council of war that was meeting in Durgadas' tent atrode Indarban, one of the stalwarts of Rabbott chiefs, with news that one of his raiding parties had gained a rich booty—five hundred camels Laden with provisions. "Here," said Soniing, Durgadas' brother, "here is our chance. Let us drive this herd of camels with flaming torches tied around them into our enemy's camp at dusk and fall upon them then." This plan was warmly acclaimed.

Meanwhile the Rama sent Bhim Singh due north with the gallant Sesodia clans to effect a junction with the Rahtors. Their object was, if possible, to drive Akbar into the mountains of which the Sultan had now a whole some dread. As it was, the Rahtors elosing in their enemys way from his friendly arrivals into the open plain all at a stroke. He could not believe that the sardy blots of Alwar. Arunachep was impatient to finish off his son who could be defeated. He re-equipped army of his son that it was stronger in numbers than the combined Rajsput forces, and he also learned that the Rama had found it impossible to drag more than six of the captured heavy guns across the river. They failed him cordially as the bulwark of his brother elicited no thanks of the little Sikhi the Bhim Singh joined the Rahtors under Durgadas and the oncoming invaders. The armies met at Nadol on the bank of Alwar, and together they turned northwards to meet Akbar, and to the southwards of Nadol on the final issue.

Such were his reasons for flight and been abandoned, more than six of the captured heavy guns across the mountains; the others had one after another come to the Rama; he heavy guns across the river. They failed him cordially as the bulwark of his brother elicited no thanks of the little Sikhi the Bhim Singh joined the Rahtors under Durgadas and the oncoming invaders. The armies met at Nadol on the bank of Alwar, and together they turned northwards to meet Akbar, and to the southwards of Nadol on the final issue.

‘Sultan’, broke in the Prince eagerly, ‘my father has commissioneed me to broach a very delicate topic to you. If you like it not, speak forthwith and I shall say no more to offend you. That you are sick to death of this senseless war we know full well. But you do not realise that your father is unrelenting in his bigotry, still more to offend you. That you are sick to death of this powerful in his resources and more determined than ever to avenge his past reverses. He sincerely believes it a sacred duty to his religion to crush us. So long, then, as he remains in power, we have no choice but to fight to the last man. But, Sultan, why should a bigot be allowed to ruin the mighty empire his ancestors bequeathed to him? Let him but follow the great Akbar’s benign policy and the sun will never set upon his fortunes. Have you ever reflected how he came to power?’

‘What one man can do, so can another. What say you to throwing in your lot with us and by our trusty aid winning the throne for yourself? Another and better chance than now? The Emperor is but poorly guarded at Ajmer. Your brothers are many marches distant from him—away in distant Ranthambor. A few days, with our most assured help, will make you master of your father’s person. The biter will be bit, and Shah better chance than now? The Emperor is but poorly guarded at Ajmer. Your brothers are many marches distant from him—away in distant Ranthambor. A few days, with our most assured help, will make you master of your father’s person. The biter will be bit, and Shah

try for an honourable peace? My father must surely now see how he is but wasting men and treasure in trying to vanquish an unconquerable foe. Men who can fight like your clansmen should not be thus senselessly slainated from the Emperor's throne and service. Rajput valour and devotion should once more be the bulwark of our Empire.'

foolish bloodshed are well known to you. Can we not  
the Sultan thus began. 'My feelings, Prince, about this  
placed him on a soft divan. Seating himself close by,  
his hand he led him into his luxurios private tent and  
Sultan Akbar greeted his old friend warmly. Taking  
busily setting things ship-shape again.

before them. They entered the camp to find everyone  
camp. News of the granting of the truce had gone  
accompanying Tahawwar Khan to Akbar's disorderly  
Durgadas agreed to a three days' truce, and the Prince  
father's wishes had now come. At his urgent entreaty,  
Bhim Singh knew that his chance of carrying out his  
sceptre.

himself had pushed Shah Jahan aside and usurped his  
it, to oust his father from his throne, even as his father  
over completely by offering to help him, if he wished  
he could find the smallest opportunity, to try to win him  
cruel war. Therefore he had instructed Bhim Singh, it  
Akbar, half a Rajput by birth, had not his heart in this  
Now the Rana had known for some time past that  
commander, he was to say, wished to open negotiations.  
go the next morning and ask for a short truce. His  
throughout this Rajput war, and commanded him to  
mind to Tahawwar Khan, his companion in misfortune  
perared so ungenerous and so futile. He opened his  
utterly tired of this bloodthirsty war. To him it ap-  
to conquer these determied adversaries. He was  
It was clear to Sultan Akbar that he could never hope  
until darkness supervened.

The Juggals were driven back in growing confusion  
legs. It was only their determination that won the day.  
pegs lying scattered everywhere entangled the horses  
ped more than they had expected. Their ropes and

His head be any blood that is treacherously split. He observer of men though he be but young in years. Upon Rajput than a Muslim ? Prince Bhim is a shrewd word of a prince of the blood, and he, moreover, more a us Rajputs that we are afraid and dare not trust to the selves to the reproach of cowardice ? Shall it be said of Durgadas. , What', said he, , and shall we expose our- his hearers. They were ready to listen to the sagacious These brave words spoken so honestly visibly affected daggler,

Blood. Unresisting I will offer my heart to any man's , If he be treacherous, I will stone for it with my it the Sultan be not honest ! , he exclaimed vehemently. caterpillar on the floors of hell for sixty thousand years demons of earth and sky torment me, may I crawl as a so assurred was he of Akbar's good faith : , May all the the tiger's lair. The Prince was moved to a hot reply, this invitation ungrat but a polite request to step into about the Sultan's honesty of purpose. They saw in the Prince had brought back expressed grave doubts in Durgadas' tent that evening to hear what message among the chiefs to their accepting Akbar's invitation to a conference. The council which had been summoned To his surprise Bhim Singh found much opposition

## SAVED BY SUTTLETY

## CHAPTER XLII

These words Bhim Singh poured out in a rapid flood  
as soon as he saw that Akbar made not the slightest  
demur.

, 'Tis a glorious project and, as you say, one certain  
of accomplishment it we seize this opportunity,' replied  
Akbar. , I accept your noble father's generous offer.  
Summon your fellow citizens to a conference here.'

, That will I most gladly do. Soon I shall hope to  
visit Delhi once again, as an honoured guest and not as  
a state-prisoner. Till the morrow, Sultan, farewell, and  
with these words Bhim Singh arose and took his leave,  
escorted to the confines of the camp by the Sultan, whose  
face was radiant with hope.

Court do we welcome this enterprise, but for the sake of  
, Sultan, not for high rank and honour at the imperial  
then repiled.  
his precedence, and wished him to be their spokesman,  
Dirgadas, on a sign from Bhim Singh that he waived  
witnesses that I speak truth.'

towards you, I most solemnly swear. May Allah be my  
my amirs are in earnest and will always show good faith  
when I am seated on the Peacock Throne. That I and  
place. High rank and honour shall be yours at Delhi  
to pieces in this sessionless fashion, another must take his  
fore, before it be too late, and the empire be shattered  
can peoples of varied race and faith be ruled. There-  
fanaticism is ruining the empire. Not by intolerance  
hypocrite in all else, in religion he is sincere. But his  
mind as to blot out the memories of past evil actions,  
the infidel, to earn merit and it possible so to occupy his  
himself a zealous Muslim. He tries, by writing against  
reconcile himself with Allah the All-Merciful by showing  
tion. Methinks, in his old age, he is endavouring to  
his own birth and kin. He cannot complain at retalia-  
evil has he wrought in Hindustan, and not least againts  
of Alahgarh even as he detroned Shah Jahan. Much  
that our enterprise is nothing less than the detroning  
fanaticism. Thakurs, doubtless the Prince has told you  
with your help it must be, put an end to useless wars of  
support in an enterprise that will, if it be successful, as  
promised me, though the mouth of his valiant son, his  
faithful friends. The gracious Maharana Raj Singh has  
generous foe, and you will, I know right well, prove  
meet you as friends and allies. You have ever been a

faces of the three Rāhotor chieftains and decided that  
After a short pause, during which he scrutinised the  
good pleasure of their host.

Upon these they sat themselves down and awaited the  
the luxurios carpet in the interior of the lofty tent.  
Cushions and divans had been arranged in a circle on  
weapons in a heap just within the tent door.

the Rājputs doffed their armour and laid down their  
the grooms. To show that they trusted the Alushtas,  
they went into the tent. The horses were given over to  
They gave their visitors a soldierly salute, and together  
the amirs were unarmed.

outside his capacious tent. To show their good faith  
Khan and three other amirs, awaiting them on foot  
choose to do. They found the Sultan, with Tahawwar  
militia choose to lead them and whatsoever he might  
heated it unforunately commander wheresoever he  
astir, but were ready, most of them, to follow their good-  
Akbar's personal body-guard, who wondered what was  
into the Ilughai camp through lines of unarmed men of  
accompanied by four grooms, proceeded on horseback  
The next day the four chieftains, in full armour and  
to accoutre.

started a false rumour, but he was overtaken and obliged  
likely perhaps to lead to blows if any mischievous-makar  
Prince deemed this precaution quite unnecessary, and  
a commanding position near the hostile camp. The  
were attempted, the whole Rājput force should take up  
Akbar's camp next morning, but, lest after all treachery  
Sangh, Durgadas, Indarbhau and Soring should go to  
This speech carried the day. It was agreed that Bhim  
honesty. Let us go to this conference without fear.'

has freely offered himself as surety for the Sultan's

ments would not be welcome to them, for he had formed  
as other Hindus. He also realised that his pronoucement  
He knew that Rajputs were not such believers in his art  
him, did not escape the notice of the astrologer.  
This whispering, when all else was dead silence around

will be our best omen.

iations. "Brother," he whispered, a dagger in his heart  
heaven apparently engaged in making abstractuse calculus  
old man as every now and then he cast up his eyes to  
remarked that he did not like the counting looks of the  
gadars and his brother were obviously uneasy. Sounding  
had had no chance of being put into operation. Dur-  
his plan of robbery, which he had so unreflectingly formed,  
forecast the lucky day. Prince Bhim hoped for the best :  
of the enterprise for the beginning of which he was to  
amir had, of necessity, divulged to him the exact nature  
spread out on a camp-table set in the open space. The  
interested a little old man bending over his great chart  
On all sides the Muslim soldiery stood watching with

into the bright sunlight outside.

Sultan leading the way, they all emerged from the tent,  
cups were refilled and drained in silence. Then, with the  
Muslims, usually so dilatory, would act so quickly. The  
Bhim Singh was surprised. He never thought the  
few minutes in the open space before Sultan's tent.  
would consult his chart of the heavenly signs within a  
The amir retimed to announce that the astrologer  
the law of his religion.

but intoxicating liquors are forbidden to the Muslim by  
would have preferred to do this in some stronger drink,  
They drank success to their enterprise. The Rajputs  
his servants appeared bearing cups of cooling sherbet.  
tent. Meanwhile, the Sultan clapped his hands and soon



the Rajputas parted from Akbar and his amirs, saying  
that they would rejoin them with thirty thousand men  
on the appointed day soon after sunrise.  
Without saying anything to the Prince about it,  
who might be trying to steal away to Ajmer to betray  
Durgadas sent out a squadron to intercept any Muslim  
that they would rejoin them with thirty thousand men  
on the appointed day soon after sunrise.  
Without saying anything to the Prince about it,  
Durgadas sent out a squadron to intercept any Muslim  
who might be trying to steal away to Ajmer to betray  
their designs to the Emperor. Unfortunately the night  
was dark, and the astrologer, of whom Durgadas was  
especially suspicious, managed to slip through on a swift  
camel. Three others, however, were encountered. On  
being challenged they had made no answer, but drawing  
their swords fought desperately to cut their way through.

From one solitary example, and that too of a man after-war days clearly proved to be a fraud, would convince nobody. So he kept his counsel.

by a charlatan in this art. But he knew that to argue  
peculiar to himself. Once before he had been betrayed  
magie-mongers, and this suspicion he knew was rather  
beyond an inveterate suspicion of all astrologers and  
could not explain it to the Prince, for he had no reasons  
had had some secret motive in thus delaying them. He  
in safe custody, for he had an instinctive feeling that he  
terminated to catch the old man if he could and keep him  
Durgadas shook his head but said nothing. He de-

themelves have men expert in star-gazing;

Father's Court, but I did not know that the Sultan  
away all the Hindu astrologers who flourished in his  
expected. I learnt at Delhi that Aurangzeb had driven  
I must admit that the Amir's suggestion was quite un-  
to-morrow. After all, a day's delay is no great matter.  
tensely superstitions, we could never get them to move  
pered: "That amir spoke the truth, these men are in-  
the soldiers around them, plucked his sleeve and whis-  
noticed the impression that the old man had made upon  
even a day's delay was hazardous, when Bhim Singh,  
Durgadas was about to argue with Sultan Akbar that  
spoken."

before sunrise of the second day now. I have  
juncture of the planets forbids your leaving this camp  
to-morrow's sun must set before you start. The con-  
his heart, he spoke in a high squeaky voice, "Sultan,  
Suddenly, lifting his head from the contemplation of  
spoken.

The must seek a new field for the exercise of his art.  
had laid much trouble in explaining away their ill success.  
More than once his prophecy had gone awry and he  
Portune had not settled upon him in Akbar's camp.  
going to give himself a day's start in order to do this.  
a plan of running off and warning the Emperor, and was

The Emperor was at this moment enjoying the cool breezes from the lake. Thither the astrologer made his way, and after much perseverance persuaded the guards to conduct him to the Presenece. His anticipations of rich reward were amply fulfilled. Aurangzeb was generous to the man who had tried his best to save his throne—nay, perhaps even his life. For the Emperor instantly realised his perilous situation. He had been in many tight corners in his life; this was unlikely to prove the tightest of all. But he did not despair or show any outward marks of fear. He rather enjoyed his peril, for his escape from it—and escape he felt assured of in his complaceant self-confidence—would prove once again to the world his astuteness and deter foolish men from further attempts against him.

An urgent despatch was sent to his sons at Raitham, but he had little hope of its reaching them in time. He must rely on his wits. Calmly and deliberately he sat down to compose a letter to Akbar. Entitling this to a confidential servant, he told him to seek out the tent of Durgadas and secretly leave it there. He left quite confident that the rash, impulsive Rajputs would fall into the trap, feeling that as Akbar was so ready, ap-

parently at all events, to deceive his own father he might well be deceiving them.

There were brief moments, however, when even his self-confidence was shaken: moments in which he carried off weight with his fellow-chieftains. Summoning Durgadas to be most dressed. Perhaps though it of Durgadas, the foe he most dreaded. Durgadas had been bewitched by the pleasant frank manners of Akbar, whose nature was so near akin to that of the Rajputs. He knew Durgadas to be sagacious, and prudent above the ordinary; he knew that his word and prudence had been broken to be sagacious,

At present, however, Durgadas was on his guard. He told his suspicions to his brother and all the other leaders except Bhim Singh, whom he now considered to be too much infatuated with Akbar to believe Augustus against him. They determined to be on the constant watch against treachery; of direct attack in the open they had no fear, for they were equal in numbers to the Mughals. Meanwhile the astrologer was thankking his stars for leading him safely past those lying in wait for him. He gloriated in his mind over the rich rewards that Augustus would give him. His camel bore him swiftly, but in the darkness he rather lost his direction. Late the next morning the old man descipted the sluggish Luni, and pushing onwards for many hours, at last he caught sight of the massive square fortifed palace built by the Emperor Akbar on a commanding hill to the north of the town lying at its base. The rays of the setting sun tinted its towers and walls with a rosy flush. Doubting if this tired camel could bear him up the steep, he deter- mined to make enquries as to whether the Emperor was there.

watching him like a lynx, and immediately jumped to the conclusion that Akbar was playing some double game and had connived at the astrologer's disappearance. Events were to show him soon enough that he misread the Sultan's character. Nobly and generously did he then strive to make amends for his mistake.

, The attainment of our important designs and high  
objects appeared to us impossible to realize by any other  
plan than that adopted by him. Such wonderful luck  
was to have all hostile leaders brought together in one  
place was perfectly impossible. Hurrah, a thousand  
savages who had escaped the net and has made them  
hurrahs, for the ability of the son who has tandem these  
obedient to himself. As they have entangled themselves  
in the net, to-morrow morning, if Allah wills, as soon as  
the sun rises, our son on that side and our victorious  
army on this side—strong reinforcements have reached  
us from Delhi—will close in round them as on the centre  
of a circle and attack them. It is necessary that our  
son should exert himself to the utmost so that not one

, Be it known to Sultan Muhammad Akbar by these  
present.

Aurangzeb's Letter.  
of the Sultan's despicable duplicity. I shall read you  
him back to his own, 'Listen,' he said, 'to the proof  
He ran to his brother's tent, awoke him, and brought  
was indubitable proof of his treachery.

Akbar had all the while been playing false. The letter  
mouseache as he did so. Now he knew for certain that  
down he pursued it, clutching his fasts and hitting his  
flat upon the carpet to get the light upon it. Sitting  
So saying, he broke the seal and spread the document  
better open it and read.

, Ah ! I have it, that was where Akbar sat, he must have  
he laid it upon the carpet and brought the light nearer.  
comes it here in my tent ? , he muttered to himself as  
, Strange, the Emperor's seal, a letter to Akbar—how  
bright of something white. Stepping, he picked it up.

in an earthen lamp, Durgadas' eye changed to catch  
By the dim glimmer of a lightedwick floating in oil  
brother's tent.

Durgadas avoided tripping up the Thakur returning from his  
tent approached. Squirming his body round, he just  
withdrawing his hand from beneath the canvas, a heavy  
Durgadas was not in the tent. As he was in the act of  
The spy was all but caught. He did not know it, but  
short while before.

sat upon the very place where Akbar had been sitting a  
canvass wall, and as ill-fate would have it he changed to  
amirs. Into the tent he pushed the letter below the  
an important council of war attended by Akbar and his  
to Durgadas' tent, the scene a few hours previously of  
Ajmer, he found his way, with considerable difficulty,  
night through Akbar's camp, now not many miles from  
This spy did his work only too well. Passing that  
hill-top.

This pretext was that they would find it cooler on the  
which he forthwith retired with the ladies of his zenana;  
ordered his body-guard to man the walls of the fort, to  
He shook off his momentary but depressing fear.

be my bane.

mutered to himself, This dog Durga was surely born to  
brown grew black as he gazed upon these two, and he  
the point of his lance, on a fire of maize-stalks. His  
was depicted on horseback toasting barley-cakes, with  
them. Sivaji was drawn seated on a couch; Durga  
cannibals, from their repellent he gazed intently upon  
Durga. Taking out the portraits, or rather the rude  
two of the most mortal foes to his repose, Sivaji and  
in which he kept the pictures drawn at his command of  
a servant, Auranzeb ordered him to bring the black box

discoveries it had really been fear that the astrologer had slipped away with the news to Auranagzeb and that his ambitious schemes might somehow be brought to naught by the wily old Emperor. The fear had passed because the slow-witted Akbar could see no means save that of precipitate flight whereby his father could save himself. He had urged speed, and wanted to go ahead with their strong force of cavalry, leaving the ill-founded suspicion that they were being led into some trap: consequently his reply had been that they were moving fast enough and had better keep together. Later on, when his error of judgment was made plain, Durgadas realised with a bitter pang how unwise it had been to do so throughout that night. It was one of the bitterest moments of his life.

Silently and speedily the Rakhors saddled their horses, concluded their bivouac and rode away into the darkness until they had put twenty miles between them and their supposed betrayer. Bhim Singh wrung his hands in despair at their folly. He could not stay these hasty evacuated their bivouac and rode away into the darkness Silently and speedily the Rakhors saddled their horses, conclusion.

The Prince endeavoured to convince Durgadas that  
he was cruelly malingering a man of upright character and  
sterling honesty. He could not succeed. Durgadas had  
not forgotten the Sultan's consternation at the absence  
of the astrologer. Akbar's face had betrayed a moment-  
ary spasm of fear. This, as Durgadas was forced by  
strife by him as fear that a traitorous design had been  
subsequent events to a compromise, had been miscon-  
strued by him as to their movements.

Away, they must away without letting Akbar have any  
idea how many new troops he was bringing? Who  
knew the Emperor would be marching upon them.  
moment the Emperor would be marching upon them.  
treachery was proved up to the hilt. Even at that  
away his life so recklessly as to stand surety for one whose  
told him he was maledicted and had better not gamble  
good faith.

The others paid little heed to his protestations. They  
his tyranny. With his life he would answer for Akbar's  
timity of overrunning Arakan and making an end of  
his compatriots not to throw away this golden oppor-  
tunity a moment would the Prince believe it. He implored  
the Emperor. It was impossible he could be so idle—never  
Emperor's; let them summon Akbar, he could surely  
Bhim Singh protested it must be a base trick of the  
There could no longer be any doubt in their minds.  
was read out to them; the seal was carefully scrutinised.  
Soon the tent was filled with the leaders. The letter

advises us to do to this traitorous abandoner of virtue;  
Durgadas! Let us summon our comrades and hear what they  
picable guncibhor! thinking to entrap us thus! Up,  
, Ha!, shouted Soni in fury, the satchibhor! des-  
may remain;

of them may escape and not a trace of this rebel rabble

returning to them made manifest. He was courteous to that his conscience was clear. He was no traitor, as his If they feared treachery on his part he could assure them that his conscience was clear. He was no traitor, as his It could not understand what had happened. tecture. He could not understand what had happened. studies to give him and his family hospitality and promises to their bivouac, appealed to Durgadas and his coming towards the end of the day he found them and, hiding they too had ridden back by the same route.

his loyal body-guard sought out the Razputs, hoping that so short a time before, Sultan Akbar with his family and so already returning the way he had come full of high hope and was moved almost to tears.

leave him and swore they would follow him to the last gasp. The Sultan was touched at this proof of devotion. They were men of his own body-guard who refused to leave him and barely a thousand men. This example was followed by the other amirs. His men, This example was followed by the other amirs. treachery they feared, Lakhawar Khan departed with to convince them that he was no traitor it, indeed, it was told him that he would seek sanctuary with Razputs turban. Taking farewell of the Sultan, who had already escaped with his life with his master's letter in his by Mirza-roobers from the mountains, and had barely clotries to shreds as evidence that he had been waylaid along him, before he reached the Emperor, to tear his letter he would give to a faithful body-servant, instructed effect, taking care to put an earlier date upon it. This supports his assertions he would write a letter to that intended to do, when the fitting opportunity arose. To this mind to withdraw with his squadrons and rejoin the Emperor, hoping to convince him that so he had always of these distant campaigns. Lakhawar Khan made up at this word and departing homewards, having had enough

not what to do. Most were inclined to take the Sultan confused murmurings. They were bewildered and knew not much consternation among the troops and

There was a short while afterwards in my quiver; is lost. I have no more arrows in my quiver; more fortunate comrade. My bolt is shot. My cause in failure. Go ye to your homes or to serve under some action other than witchcraft. Our enterprise is ended lived ! Men, I can find no cause for this incredible have lived to see the day when Rajput faith is so short-officers and thus addressed his men : , Alas, that we in a hollow square. He advanced to the centre with his Sultan found his troopers and foot-soldiers formed up Issuing a short while afterwards from his tent, the

said immediately ; bewitched. Go now and assemble the men. We must like mist before the sun ! Verily, they must have been And Bhim Singh, too ! Alas for fidelity that is dissolved faithful allies you will not find anywhere in the world „ ? „ , more incredibile ! Do you not remember Durga's words, claimed to Tahaawar Khan who had brought the tidings, whether, he was mightily perturbed. , What ! , he ex-allies gone during the hours of darkness none knew told him news that the Rajput camp was empty, and his

When Akbar awoke next morning and heard the as-

## RAJPUT HONOUR RETRIEVED

### CHAPTER XVII

dwelling upon the past. He assured Akbar that never  
most promising enterprise, but, he added, it was no use  
know, would be very much grieved at the failure of their  
and must hasten back to Chancery. His father, he  
The Prince had received bad news of his father's health  
clans after a tender leave-taking of his friend the Sultan.  
Next morning Prince Bhim departed with the Sesodia  
the hard journey before them.

that they should now take a long night's rest in view of  
whence they might take ship to Persia. He suggested  
wrat and convey him and his family safe to Surat,  
thousand swords would shield him from his father's  
wero Akbar's fixed determination to himself with a  
They cursed their folly. Durgadas said that it such  
The chief hastened to this sad speech in desperation.  
escape his long arm.

me and my embezzlement. Thus alone shall I  
escape his vengeance. I must put the wide seas between  
thrones I now renounce. My first and last desire is to  
he boast of his astuteness. Therefore all thoughts of  
Alarming : no danger catches him asleep. Rightly does  
notting disturbs the equality or self-possession of  
You letter was too clever. I might have known that  
gudas, for believing that I was about to betray you.  
I do not blame you and your brother chieftains. Dur-  
, Nay, he repented, it can never be. My day is over.  
Akbar sniled a sad smile and slowly shook his head.

their chinco of setting him on the Peacock Throne.  
Perhaps fortune's tide would turn ; they might yet get  
and protection so long as they remained in Rajasthan.  
Jalawar, every clan in which would give them hospitality  
to consider himself and his family honored guests of  
amends even at the cost of his life. He begged Akbar

the Sultan's right hand and swore that he would make their recklessness had brought upon Akbar. He seized feelings of sincere regret and sorrow at the calamity Durgadas' handsome face showed plainly to all his

as it pulls the strings.

he cried, 'we are the slaves of fate; puppets that dance farther had been more than a match for him. 'Alas,' called upon that same hour to explain matters. His him. He expressed his regret that he had not been that, on the face of it, it was damning evidence against

On being shown the Sultan acknowledged

could hardly speak for emotion.

He expressed his gratitude to the Prince in a voice that overjoyed to find his friend had never doubted him.

These words rejoiced the heart of Akbar. He was

tent, Durgadas.'

Emperors to have a letter dropped by some spy in your life on his honesty? It was a cunning trick of the tell you? Was I too reckless a gambler to stake my

'Ha!', shouted Bhim Singh in triumph. 'What did I

written to me these many weeks past.'

'My father's letter to me?', replied the Sultan in amazement. 'I do not understand. My father has not

reading your father's letter to you.'

to you, but indeed we had some cause to think it after father has tricked us. Forgive us for impudic treachery Now we know for a certainty that the wily old fox you could have made us act so foolishly, so impulsively. contention, 'you are right. Naught but witchcraft , Sultan,' exclaimed Durgadas, whose face expressed some apparently reasonable grounds.

that they would not have left him in the lurch without know what had bewitched them, for he was convinced

of his benefaction.

You would like to write him an ironical acknowledgement broad grin, , but I have sent him no thanks. Perhaps sum to alleviate your sufferings', he excused with a , Behold, Sultan, your generous father has sent this

to his tent, spread the coins out before him.

When they departed he laughed aloud and, calling Akbar that he would do what the Emperor seemed to wish. thoughts he took it, giving the messengers to understand first impulse had been to spur the tribe, but on second stood clearly the motive which which it was sent. His was handed to him without stipulations, but he under- before he turned aside into Alawar. This enormous sum to Durgadas one morning by two messengers sent on swift camels in hot haste after him. They reached him of bimberi. Forty thousand gold , suns , were delivered The Emperor had even attempted the crude device

of Alawar and Durgadas and so down into Alawar.

south-east and taking his guest through the hilly tracts until too late how he had tricked them by turning imagined him to be making for Jalore, not discovering the Liugals followed him but, misled by false reports, difficult to maintain themselves. His plan succeeded. deserts of Alawar wherein large armies would find it south-western direction as if he were seeking the western With this object, Durgadas led his little force in a

off the pursuers already hot upon their tracks.

elude the vigilance of the Emperor's navvabs in his journey was long and full of peril. They would have to and his men along in headlong flight to the coast. The Alawar, he and his trainees hurried Akbar

Whilst all these events were happening, the Emperor was stirred into activity. His two sons had by this time almost reached him from Ranthambor. He had had a few uneasy moments until he learnt that they were not accomplices in Akbar's rebellion but were really coming to his rescue. His wrath was kindled against Akbar: he was determined to take him alive and put him to a hanging death in Gwalior fort. Therefore he instructed his sons, Muazzam and Azaam, to pursue bent upon the one object of capturing Akbar. He would never feel secure so long as that renegade was at large. Ranaa would be suspended, for all their energies must be bent upon the one object of capturing Akbar. He would have to a rebel and bring him back. The war against him was still on.

These sentiments were soon communicated to his amirs and other officers. Tahawwar Khan's trick had not deceived the astute monarch, who preferred not to employ him any further in his service. Too late that amir, as a parting act of vengeance against the Emperor, managed to convey intelligence to Akbar of his father's intentions, and urged him to flee as fast as he could before the gathering storm.

Rahbar leader determined to rely upon his own efforts. Give them effective aid in this crisis, the indomitable Ranaa of Mewar was a dying man no longer able to Emperor was about to descend upon them and that the

Emperor was about to descend upon them and that the

When Durgadas learnt that the whole force of the

Rajputs desert him. Wishing him a safe journey to the coast and a prosperous voyage and all happiness in his new home, the Prince rode away.

Rajput honour retrieved

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which could be starved into surrender at any time the for him to watch, except an isolated garnison at Chitor held. Inasmuch as there were no longer any enemies to Udaipur and summon his heir, Raj Singh, from the This policy fitted in with the Rana's desire to return and bend all his energies to the capture of Akbar. Aurangzeb's determination to leave the war in Mewar not help breaching a sigh of relief when he heard of interest in the most recent turn of affairs. He could despite from his fever and could take an intelligent Rana for a time from his lethargy. He had a short father and of its sad and dramatic eclipse roused the promising beginning of Akbar's rebellion against his The Prince's account of the fighting at Nada, of the abate the fever or revive his fading energies.

bad, who was also court physician, could do little to was shocked at the change in his father. The court robust self. Bhim Singh, on his return to Ghanerao, Rana Raj Singh was but a pale shadow of his former wounds he had received at the battle of the Berach, of the last two years and enfeebled by the many severe with constant attacks of fever, worn out by the anxieties health was only too true. He was a dying man. Racked The news that had reached Durgadas about the Rana's

## A TREATY OF PEACE

### CHAPTER XIX

The Sultan understood. He grasped the Rāhotor's hand and thanked him warmly for his adroitness in replenishing their coffers when he might in his first anger have thrown the money back at the messengers, who would doubtless have bolted with it to their own enrichment. At last, after many narrow escapes and much hard-ship, the party of fugitives, guarded day and night by their faithful escort, safely reached Surat. There they found a English vessel sailing for the Persian Gulf. Embarking thenceon with his family, Akbar was conveyed in safety to a port in the Gulf whence he made his way to Persia, and there he died a year before his father breathed his last.

All through the rainy season the negotiations dragged on, the Rana being reluctantly too, ill to attend to any business. In the third month the unfortunate ruler more reasonable frame of mind.

Rana Raj Singh received him hospitably and proposed that he should accompany them to Udaipur, where they might discuss possible terms of peace at leisure. Accordingly, on an appointed day, the Rana and his clans took leave of Thakur Gopinath and his daughter Prema-bai and set out across the mountains. They travelled slowly, for the Rana felt the jolting of the palki and could not go many miles at a time.

the acquisition of the man who had so successfully  
though he would turn aside from his journey to make  
absence by the Emperor, he said, to visit his estates and  
paid a visit to Ghantreno. He had been given leave of  
officer in Aranagzeb's army and high in his confidence,  
At this juncture, Raju Shiva Singh of Bikander, an  
for the journey.

Udaipur as soon as he had recovered sufficient strength  
to, the Rana announced his intention of returning to  
brother from the throne. Satisfied with his observa-  
tion of a younger son and had no desire to oust his  
the joyful conclusion that he was quite reconciled to the  
the Rana watched Bihari Singh keenly and soon came to  
With thoughts constantly occupying his mind,  
out of fear.

avoutre Rana, not to deal leniently with his brother  
he wanted to warn his heir, the son of Rangadevi, his  
assure himself that he was not unambitious of the rājya ;  
of a man than his brother, the Rana now wanted to  
himself, however, that Bihari Singh was, after all, more  
knocks and adventures as his brother. Keeping within  
such a free hand to go roaming about in search of hard  
deed, that Raj Singh, the heir-apparent, had not had  
it came. Would his efforts realize, the Rana won-  
tuous spirit though he had not shirked his duty when  
brother had not shown a particularly warlike or adven-  
had won his spurs over and over again, whereas his  
out a doubt, immensely increased his popularity ; he  
was breaking out on his death. Bihari Singh had, with-  
Lately he had been tormented by the dread of civil  
For the Rana knew himself to be approaching his end,  
return to the capital to receive his father's last commands.  
Rajputs chose to surround them, Raj Singh was free to



matter of a formal request for her hand. He was to find that winning his bride was to be no mere proverb, there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.' to him. But he was soon to learn the truth of the immediately and ask the Rani Kormadevi to give her saw himself already her wedded Lord. He would depart could take his bride Ambalka, for, in his own mind, he wanted a fit of his own and a strong castle to which he that his brother's court was no place for him. He to his brother on the velvet cushion. He felt, however, own hands. Bhai Singh was honoured by a seat close hereditary right of girding on the Rana's sword with his nobles of Melwar, the Rawat of Salumbar exercising his smania of jogalty in a full durbar of the chieftains and The new Rana was solemnly invested with the in-

his country than any of his predecessors. know that Rana Raj Singh had done greater deeds for from the capital, in order that all who came after might Mahasati or, place of great faith, at Ar, a mile or two overtopped all the other connotaphs in the crowded ported by handsome columns raised on a lofty terrace, from the quarters of Kanktoli. The vaulted roof, sup- father's memory an elegant manuscript in white marble In course of time, Rana Jai Singh erected to his sacrifice.

Vast what was universally considered a most honourable The brothers lamented their deaths, but could not pre- Jai Singh, together with twelve of their handmaids. Bhai Singh's mother, and Rangadevi, the mother of the magnanimous Lala Rana his Rani Arundattadevi, Jai Singh applied the lighted torch, were immolated with people sank into death. On the funeral pyre, to which grew rapidly worse and to the genuine sorrow of all his

The Rani regretted, however, in her letter to the Rao, graciously reply to Rao Keesri Singha. . . .

cepted the cocoonut on behalf of her ward and sent a unseated times, was evidently suitable. So she accustomedly loved. Here was a match that, in view of the now needed for the protection of the girl whom she so mountains. A stronger arm than hers, she felt, was to leave her palace at Jodhpur to take refuge in the Ambalka's safety and wretched growing too heavy for She was feeling the burden of her responsibility for Rani Korumdevi looked with favor upon his suit.

Lences and virtues.

message and expatiated at length upon the Rao's exceeding a widow. His prurient flatulence delivered this his former wife would outweigh the disadvantage of his still in the prime of life and akinsman of the Rani by that the fact that he was a Framar of ancient lineage determined to end his days of widowhood. He hoped Kumbhalmer, and, falling in love with her beauty, had recent days he had caught a glimpse of the Princess at lose his wife. But in the constant mountain warfare of years of age, Rao Keesri Singha had had the misfortune to still comparatively a young man about thirty-four

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

## CHAPTER XX

but no additional demands should be imposed. His father's throne and country should be restored to Prince Ajit Singh, who was still under the protection of Allwar. Whilst his brother was thus engaged upon these weighty matters of state, Bhim Singh pursued his happy way, busily imagining all the bliss that the future held for him. How different would have been his feelings if he had known that, some time before the death of Rana Raj Singh, Rao Kesri Singh of Bednor, a Prahmar rank-his protégé in this symbiotic liaison the hand of her devi, regnestrating in this symbiotic liaison the hand of her

of playing a trick upon him.  
‘O Premabai, what shall I do ?’, wailed Ambalka as  
they sat together in the dusk of the evening on the wall  
of Ghanerao Fort. ‘Kesri Singh has sent a message to  
say that he is coming on the wings of the wind. Oh,  
that the dear Rani had told me sooner ! How can I  
warm Bhim Singh, my beloved, in time ? Do you think  
that he is indifferent ? Nay, nay, I cannot believe it  
after his noble service to me and his tender vows of un-  
dying devotion. How can I get word to him to rescue  
me from this marriage that the kind Rani has arranged  
for me ? Ah, she does not know how my heart is break-  
ing. She thinks my sadness to be due to grief at leaving  
her.’ As she poured out her woes in this flow of words,  
her arms around her and comforted her by whispering  
accompained by tears, the kind-hearted Premabai put  
into her ear, ‘Be comforted, dear Ambalka, your hero

Bhim Singh on the plea of urgent family affairs. The Prince had courteously escoreted him for a short distance out of the city, naturally supposing that he was returning to his estates and having no idea of the Rao's real destination and object. The latter, knowing that Bhim Singh was Ambalika's bracelete-brother and suspecting that, in spite of the ban, the high-spirited young man wished to be her husband, had judged it wiser not to accuse him of accepting his offer and thereby causing him to make no demur, the Prince could hardly accuse him but, as the Rani had accepted his offer and the Princess bride. If Bhim Singh was disappointed, he was sorry friend, Thakur Gopinath, to be wedded to this beautiful even to his own men. He would soon be with his great mention his real business to any one at the court nor wished to be her husband, had judged it wiser not to accuse him of accepting his offer and thereby causing him to make no demur, the Prince could hardly accuse him but, as the Rani had accepted his offer and the Princess bride. If Bhim Singh was disappointed, he was sorry friend, Thakur Gopinath, to be wedded to this beautiful even to his own men. He would soon be with his great

Rao Kesar Singh had left the court two days before to be duly performed immediately on his arrival. Rani pushed on preparations for the marriage ceremonies hastening to Ghambrao with a splendid retinue. The had delayed matters. But now he was free and was the Rao at the court for the installation of the new Rana. The Rana's death and the obsequatory attendance of breaking her heart.

appreciates kept her tongue-tied. But she was secretly acquires in what the good queen wished to do for her and a feeling that evidently she should make her band for her ward. Ambalika's great love for the Rani had not thought of Bhim Singh as a possiblehusband to the Rajput emperors. It was for this reason that the reason of these clans having given daughters in marriage marriage with the Kacchivahas and the Rashtra clans by Sesodias had resolved to exclude themselves from inter-bracket-brother. She did not know, poor girl, that the would have given her to Bhim Singh, her hero and her She thought that the Rani had succeeded her secret and since of the other, was too much overcome to protest. Ambalika, when at last apprised of the Rani's acceptation,

to a widow. A quiet weddimg suited his temper and some might raise objections to the marriage of a Princess much store upon ceremonial, and moreover he felt that Singh was quite content. He was not a man who set as was possible under the circumstances. Rao Kesar Singh was arranging the marriage on a grand scale help her in this castle as her temporary home and he would probably of his castle as her temporary home and he would Ghambrao, a close friend of his, had offered her the hos- and splendor at Jodhpur, but Thakur Gomukh of that the wedding could not be celebrated with full pomp

ardent loves? ,  
will be cast aside—but what are long dull ceremonies to  
the purorit will wed you to your beloved. Ceremony  
faster than the whirlwind to some strong castle. There  
and he will raise you to his saddle. Away you will ride  
cortains, you will see your hero. You must jump out  
returning in your pall, if you peep out through the  
mostearnest ones you ever prayed. As you are  
future happiness. Your prayers, I know, dear, will be  
wedding more to go to the hill-temple, to pray for your  
soluble. You must request the Rani's leave on your  
carry you off before the marriage tie is made indis-  
chiftain has done in our annals, must sweep down and  
, what I propose is this. Bhim Singh, as many another  
, 'Bribery then,' answered the Thakur's daughter,  
what you propose.

'What a wise head you have, my dearest friend, upon  
your young shoulders! replied Ambalika after this long  
explanation. , 'But now, there's no time to lose—tell me

your wishes are, but must help ourselves.'  
Do not blame her. So you see we cannot tell her what  
of the treachery and cannot afford to risk their enemy.  
But the Rani, remember, is yet in ignorance of the terms  
action would be base desertion of the Rajput cause.  
their peace treaty benefit Jiarwar: otherwise their  
must, however, credit them with the intention of making  
as seems likely, they withdraw from the fight. We  
you before, afford to make enemies of her allies, even if,  
go against your heart's wish. But she cannot, as I told  
dilemma, for she loves you truly and would not willingly  
whereas our clans have done so. Hence the ban. And  
now it Bhim Singh appears and openly stands as a rival

giving their daughters in marriage to the Mughals,  
the Sesoalias have never contaminated their blood by  
love, replied, 'Well, Ambalika, you must know now that  
these two clans with whom he was not despatched in  
himself as his bride, or indeed of any other maiden of  
intermarriage would prevent Bhim Singh fulfilling of  
Premabai, who had long realised that this ban on  
as a husband for me.'

Why the dear Rani never thought of my bracelet-brother  
have they put this ban upon themselves? Now I see  
why they put this ban upon themselves? Now I see  
I knew not of any such impediment. Why  
of their clan with a Kachhwaha or with a Rathor.'

'That would be unwise', replied the sagacious Premabai.  
openly disregarding their ban on the marriage of a prince  
of the royal family, said 'The Rani could not risk offending the Sesoalias by  
saying for very joy, 'You are the truest friend a girl ever  
beloved, beloved Premabai', exclaimed the Prince,  
shall we tell the Rani that I will wed none other?'

I was sure. A short hour ago my messenger returned  
he would not desert his late allies in Alwar. Of this  
bring about. His heart ever yearns for adventure and  
treaty which the Rana is said to be concluding will  
he would not rest happy in the idle life that the peace  
For he would never find his brother's court congenial:  
duties at court were over he was sure to start out hither,  
his way hither. I knew that as soon as his ceremonial  
that my messenger would not need to ride many miles  
to Udaipur but would be lucky enough to meet him on  
ever I heard what was about to take place, I sent a swift  
messenger to the Prince. I had an instinctive feeling

The time that she was obliged to spend in the temple in sacrifice and prayer seemed ages long. Her heart beat wildly as she re-entered her palli for the return. But her agitation was short lived. Scarcely had her palli got under weight with its precious freight than she heard confused cries of astonishment, a clatter of horses' hoofs and a scuffling of feet. There at last was her hero on his good steed, "Thunderbolt", by the side of her litter. The mace-beaters had scattered before him and his three companions like leaves before the wind. With a glad cry she jumped out to be swung up by a strong arm to her beloved one's saddle. Away they rode round the hill and out of sight, galloping as fast as the deer little.

Rani was terribly upset, and knew not what to make of the matter. Rao Kesar Singh was in a fury at the insult Bhim Singh had given him. The mace-beaters were certain that it was the Prince. Unfortunately Bhim Singh had forgotten Premabai's advice to come masked so as to gain time by throwing the outfit. Now the Rao of Bednor was for instant rage bridgeman into uncertainty as to who had done the deed. The Rao of Bednor was for instant rage bridgeman into uncertainty as to who had done the deed. Moreover it looked like a concereted plot between Ambalika and Bhim Singh, a displeaseure of all his kinsmen. Moreover it would suffer the Prince by disengaging the ban would well be pleased by the Prince to throw pursuers off the scent. From any of the peasants, who had probably been bad gone, nor were they likely to gain reliable information about the slightest idea in what direction the fugitives had not the Thakur Gopinath, however, brought him, not without difficulty indeed, to see that pursuit was vain. They Thakur Gopinath, however, brought him, not without difficulty indeed, to see that pursuit was vain.

Ambalika's eyes glistered with joy as she listened to her friend. Then a feeling of fearful regret took possession of her. She thought of the Rani's vexation at her visit. She thought of the Rani's punishment of her beloved one; of her secret revenge overwhleming her beloved one; of her sudden offerred to the worthy man of her choice. She had no thought.

In a broken voice she uttered her fears, but Premabai laughead and told her to have no fear. Bhim Singh was all fell out as had been arranaged. On the morning of the day before the night of the full moon, a procession of gaily-decorated palas was wending its way to a small temple that nestled at the foot of a hill a mile beyond the walls of the Thakur's little town. Ambalika and her maidens were going to pray to the Goddess for her future happiness. The little bride's heart was all a flutter as she shyly peeped out of her curtains and could butter as she shyly peeped out of her curtains and could see no signs of her hero. She even now watching solemnly with their silver-headed maces on all sides of her.

Palace-attendants walking solemnly with their silver should be suspeected by any of her bearers or of the plot put out her hand to wave him a greeting lest the was even now watching her progress. She dared not side of the hill, or, hidden among the trees on the top, promised to be ready. Probably he was on the other ever, that he had received Premabai's letter and had seen no signs of her hero. She remained herself, however, as she shyly peeped out of her curtains and could butter as she shyly peeped out of her curtains and could her maidens were going to pray to the Goddess for her future happiness. The little bride's heart was all a flutter as she shyly peeped out of her curtains and could see no signs of her hero. She even now watching solemnly with their silver-headed maces on all sides of her.

admire his manliness and good sense. To him, the right man had come. Surely Premabai must have known that he could trust her discretion. Now, it seemed he had no wish to impose a bribe upon her. He wanted Premabai to have a free hand in the matter; marriage, though he would miss her dreadfully. He giving serious thought to the question of his daughter's her hopeless love for the Prince. Of late he had been Thakur Gopinath kept himself in the background.

Right was passing all too quickly. Indeed, a delight to have such a companion. Their fort-and her constant association with her father. It was affairs until he remembered the manner of her upbringing extent of her knowledge and her sagacity in practical ready-witted girl. In fact, he was astonished at the He had no need to give lengthy explanations to such a she answered his questions before they were half-spoken. She anticipated his wishes before he could express them; passionableness. She had an uncommon gift of intuition. striking. He was fascinated by the charm of her com-and the frank open manners of Premabai was very very shy and retiring. The contrast between her ways character to suit him as a wife. His first wife had been that such a child would grow up too masterful a of character. In his younger days the Rao had thought as a child of remarkable self-possession and independence was taking in his daughter, whom, indeed, he had known with pleasure the growing interest his friend the Rao would please his daughter better.

During the next few days Thakur Gopinath noted change of mood and replied that he was sure nothing of the wild beasts. The Thakur was rejoiced at this

Her kind thought touched the Rao's heart. , Like father, like daughter, she was playing, as he looked at her straight little form and her fine face with more attention than he had previously given to her. After all, he reflected, this mountaineer nymph, this girl of the open air, would be a more suitable wife for him than a zemanna-bred, tender and perhaps ignorant girl. He had fallen in love with a pretty face, but beauty often lies skin deep. The Thakur's daughter was right. An unloving wife would prove no blessing. He would cultivate Prema Bai's acquaintance; but he must make sure of her, for to be twice foiled would make him a veritable language-stoock. So he acquiesced in the Thakur's reasoning, sent a comforting message to the Rao and told his friend that they must forget their troubles in hunting. Perhaps, he said with a smile, Prema Bai would put her knowledge of woodcraft to a more innocent use and show him the lairs

At this moment Premabai entered to tell her father that the rude captors of her dear friend had last been seen galloping round the foot of the temple-hill and must have made for the mountains, for otherwise they would have kept in view a long time. Should she use her knowledge of woodcraft and tracking to find out what path they had taken?

little temple outside the walls instead of the big temple in the town. She had, he remembered, finally persuaded the Rani that she was too shy to go in procession through the streets before she was actually obliged to do so. Therefore, as his daughter Premabai had but recently embarked on herding with great astonishment of this event, let the Rao remember that an unusual life was an ill thing to live with.

thanks and resolve.

them who will have turned to him. Let them return really to their good. The gods had given us a task of spite to the gods, who know better than we do what is best for us. Premañjali is to be his wife and already the bearded god is Permabali who now much a softer character now found himself in a situation he had brought about completely by his own carelessness. He had slept in the sun and come out of it. The people in the world, after this punishment of the god, were ready to Permabali and his wife. A god could not be angry with them who had done this. This was a very bad record of each other's life. The first record is very good in the Bhagavat. In the Bhagavat record is no better than Bhagavat Srimad. In this record there is to be seen clearly differentiated that the

Thakur's character.

considering the number of the King of Bhadrak which is next full moon the fifth day from of Chaitra month when to write, after all, not to mention many. Before the time of the

The Rani's elaborate preparations for a wedding  
outright capable.  
the very queen of women, unselfish, prudent and thor-  
oughly detached away Ambalika, knew that he had indeed won  
Singh, now utterly grateful to Bhim Singh for having  
that her heart, too, was full of joy. Thus Rao Kesri  
reguest, Premabai embraced him lovingly and whispered  
her father told her of his joy and pleasure in the Rao's  
telling him of his daughter's sayings and doings. When  
his old friend, who had taken various opportunities of  
He was very gratified at the pleasure this gave to  
Thakur and formally requested his daughter's hand.  
would not be likely to reject his suit, spoke to the  
day of their pleasant shikar expedition that Premabai  
At last, Rao Kesri Singh, realising more clearly every  
and yet be fondly loved and cherished.

to be herself, continue to express her own personality,  
piling into a strange forbidding world but could continue  
leaving her father for a husband she would not be step-  
cate her rather unique qualities and disposition. In  
twice her own age who seemed so deeply to appre-  
could trust her life and her happiness to a man nearly  
exerting its natural innocence. Accustomed to daily  
out of his teens. Her very unusual upbringing was now  
attractive and endearing qualities than a youth hardly  
all, she began to realise, a man over thirty had more  
joyed talking to the Rao on all manner of topics. After  
father had ever been unbound. She thoroughly en-  
father's characteristics; and her admiration for her  
Singh. She seemed to recognise in him many of her  
more captivated by these very qualities in Rao Kesri  
So it turned out. Premabai was in truth more and







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